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REMBRANDT

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THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

St. Petersburg

Frontispiece

REMBRANDT

A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND WORK

BY

R. BALDWIN BROWN, M.A.

OF EDINBURGH

LONDON: DUCKWORTH AND CO.

1907

REMBRANDT

A STUDY OF HIS LIFE AND WORK

BY

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OF EDINBURGH

LONDON: DUCKWORTH AND CO.
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1907

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

REMBRANDT'S WORK, AND THE METHOD OF ITS STUDY

Rembrandt's artistic output. The chief modern writings upon his art and his life.

Plan of the present study. The questions to be asked about an artist: the general position of his art, his personal life in relation to his work, the extent and range of his productions, their aesthetic value. These questions as applied in the case of Rembrandt: how the book seeks to answer them. The general impression of Rembrandt's genius . . . . . Pp. 1–12

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF REMBRANDT IN MODERN PAINTING

The advance towards modern painting in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Futility of Italian 'Naturalism.' Elsheimer brings northern painting to Rome about 1600. Elsheimer's style: his indirect influence on Rembrandt. Rembrandt and the democratic tendency of modern painting. Rembrandt as an impressionist. Meaning of this term in connection with the act of seeing. The ideals of impressionist painting. Rembrandt as representative of modern art . . . . . Pp. 13–26

CHAPTER III

THE SURROUNDINGS OF REMBRANDT

Holland in the seventeenth century: its position in Europe and in the world at large. Wealth and importance of Amsterdam. Sir Thomas Overbury's description of the Dutch people early in the century. Wealth of the country as leading to the encouragement of art. The dealers. The demand for portraits, both single and in groups. The Dutch 'Corporation' pictures. Influence of religion upon art. Rembrandt as Protestant and Mennonite. Character of his religious paintings. The Jewish community at Amsterdam and Rembrandt's relation to it. The literary culture of the age. Classicism in literature and in art. Rembrandt's use of the allegorical style . . . . . Pp. 27–42

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY LIFE AND FORTUNES OF REMBRANDT, 1606–1642

Leyden in 1606: Rembrandt's home and family. Portrait-studies of his relatives, and of himself.

Rembrandt's early years: his schooling: did he study at the University? His knowledge of the Bible. Rembrandt's first teachers. His early studies as described by Constantin Huygens. Rembrandt's settlement in Amsterdam. His marriage with Saskia van Uylenburch. His worldly prosperity: his pupils. The house in the Breestraat and the artistic treasures it contained, Rembrandt as collector. Illness and death of Saskia: the terms of her will . . . . . Pp. 43–75

CHAPTER V

REMBRANDT'S LATER LIFE, 1642–1669

Change in Rembrandt's life and fortunes after the death of Saskia. His relations with the nurse of Titus: and with Hendrickje Stoffels. Why Rembrandt did not marry Hendrickje. Her use to him as a model. Titus van Rijn, and his appearance in Rembrandt's works. Financial troubles arising from the purchase of the house in the Breestraat. Rembrandt's bankruptcy, and the sale of his collections. Effect of this upon the artist. Alleged visit to England. Partnership of Hendrickje and Titus. The new home on the Rozengracht. Depreciated value of the artist's work. Deaths of Hendrickje and Titus. The last days . . . . . Pp. 76–109

CHAPTER VI

REMBRANDT'S WORK IN DIFFERENT FIELDS: THE DRAWINGS

Rembrandt as draughtsman, etcher, and painter: how his works in the different fields are related.

General character of the drawings of Rembrandt: their number: reproductions of them: materials employed. Questions of authenticity and date.

Studies of animals, especially lions. The drawings of landscape: the Chatsworth sketch-book. Copies of Indian miniatures. Studies for portraits. Compositions from classical and sacred story. Good motives not afterwards carried out. Drawings actually carried out in etchings and pictures. Genre subjects: studies of beggars: of children. Titus in the drawings. Studies of the male figure: of the female nude . . . . . Pp. 110–146

CHAPTER VII

THE ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT

The processes of engraving. The nature of etching. The question of 'states.' Catalogues and reproductions of Rembrandt's etchings; the question of genuineness; the chronology of the etchings.

The early self-studies: later self-portraits. Studies of beggars. First essays in the nude. The Saskia etchings. Early religious pieces and the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds.' Etchings of 1641–51. The landscapes: the portrait-etchings: the later nudes. Figure-subjects from the Old and New Testaments. The 'Death of Mary': the 'Broad Presentation': the '100 Florin Plate': 'Christ as Teacher.' The latest religious pieces.

The technique of the etchings: use of the etched line, of the drypoint, of the graver. Rembrandt as printer. Examples of his use of the various technical methods . . . . Pp. 147–198

CHAPTER VIII

REMBRANDT'S EARLIER PAINTINGS. 1627–1642

Number of Rembrandt's pictures. The portrait study the most characteristic form; its importance and interest. The portrait proper. Rembrandt as painter of 'Corporation' pieces. His single portraits: Were they good likenesses? Subject-pictures. Genre pieces hardly represented. Pictures from religious and classical story. Rembrandt's relation in these to his predecessors. His classical designs. Differences of treatment in the figure-pieces. Points noticed in design and in lighting. Rembrandt's treatment of landscape. His still-life pieces: his grisailles.

Chronological survey of Rembrandt's pictorial activity. His relation to his teachers. The earliest dated pictures. His first essays in the nude. The Hague 'Presentation' of 1631. The early Amsterdam portraits. Rembrandt's poses. His self-portrait of 1640. The Lanckoronski Girl. Saskia portraits. Religious pieces: the Munich 'Passion' series, etc. Female nudes. 'Susannah' and 'Bathsheba' . . . . . Pp. 199–234

CHAPTER IX

REMBRANDT'S LATER PAINTINGS, c. 1642–1669

The problem of the Corporation piece: the 'Lesson on Anatomy' of 1632 compared with the 'Night Watch' of 1642. Analysis and discussion of the latter picture. Has it been cut down?

The landscapes as characteristic of the central period of Rembrandt's career.

Rembrandt's self-portraits, especially as bearing on the question of the effect on his art of his misfortunes.

The later portraits and portrait-studies. The 'Syndics.' General characteristics of Rembrandt's work in the last decade. Pp. 235–263

CHAPTER X

REMBRANDT AS ARTIST: CONCEPTION AND TREATMENT

Faults and shortcomings, Amateurishness: meaning of the term as expressing Rembrandt's experimental vein and occasional uncertainty. His hesitation in the matter of lighting. Effect on his art of his solitary life. Defects in Rembrandt's treatment of the human form. His female nudes.

The artistic qualities of Rembrandt's painted work in general. The intellectual and moral elements in his art. His appreciation of character. Depth and seriousness of his insight. His religious compositions. His treatment in its various aspects of the life of Christ. His final word in the 'Return of the Prodigal'

Pp. 264–292

CHAPTER XI

REMBRANDT AS ARTIST: TREATMENT AND HANDLING

The relation of an artist's execution to the rest of his work. Rembrandt as an executant in oils. Some comparisons.

The chronology of Rembrandt's technique. A general development but much variety within the periods. Prevailing hues at different epochs. Rembrandt's manipulation. Flemish practice and Dutch. Some Flemish traits in Rembrandt's technique. His normal handling. Opinions of old writers on his colour and manipulation.

Selected pictures by Rembrandt studied as representing his artistic statement as a whole. The 'Labourers in the Vineyard' (St. Petersburg); 'Danaë' (ibid.); 'Bathsheba' (Louvre); 'Civilis' (Stockholm); the 'Family' (Brunswick); 'Jacob Blessing' (Cassel); 'Hendrickje' (Salon Carré, Louvre); 'Jan Six' (Six Collection, Amsterdam); the 'Syndics' (Amsterdam).

Concluding word . . . . . Pp. 293–327

INDICES

I. THE WORKS OF REMBRANDT . . . . Pp. 329–335

II. ETCHINGS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBERS OF BARTSCH P. 336

III. GENERAL INDEX. . . . . Pp. 337–341

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE		*To face page*
	The Return of the Prodigal. *St. Petersburg*	*Frontispiece*
1.	Hendrickje Stoffels at a Window. *Berlin*	10
2.	Simeon, or The Presentation in the Temple. *The Hague*	18
3.	Pen drawings of a Lame Beggar. *British Museum*	24
4.	The Hog (etching), B. 157	26
5.	*a.* Distant View of Amsterdam (etching), B. 210 *b.* The Gold-Weigher's Country Seat (etching), B. 234	28
6.	Abraham Francen, Dealer in Works of Art (etching), B. 273	32
7.	The Mennonite Preacher, Anslo. *Berlin*	36
8.	Part of Plan of Leyden, of 1578	40
9.	*a.* Rembrandt's Mother (etching), B. 354 *b.* Drawing of Baby in Cradle. *Heseltine Collection*	52
10.	The Youthful Rembrandt (self portrait). *The Hague*	52
11.	Rembrandt with Saskia on his Knee. *Dresden*	72
12.	The Holy Family. *St. Petersburg*, 1645	82
13.	Rembrandt in Working Dress (self-portrait, drawing). *Heseltine Collection*	84
14.	Study from Hendrickje Stoffels. *Louvre, Salon Carré*	86

PLATE		To face page
15.	Drawing of Seated Youth, Titus van Rijn. *Stockholm*	88
16.	The Syndics. *Amsterdam*	98
17.	An Elephant (drawing in black chalk). *British Museum*	116
18.	View of Omval (etching), B. 209	124
19.	Christ Mocked by the Soldiers (drawing). *Chatsworth Collection*	130
20.	Manoah and his Wife. (From the picture 'The Sacrifice of Manoah.') *Dresden*	138
21.	Two Studies of the Female Nude. *British Muesum*	146
22.	Rembrandt Leaning on a Stone Sill (etching), B. 21	160
23.	Rembrandt Drawing at a Window (etching), B. 22	162
24.	Diana Bathing (etching), B. 201	164
25.	The Annunciation to the Shepherds (etching), B. 44	166
26.	The Three Trees (etching), B. 212	168
27.	Clement de Jonghe (etching), B. 272	172
28.	The Woman with the Arrow (etching), B. 202	176
29.	The 100 Florin Plate (etching), B. 74	180
30	The Blind Tobit (etching), B. 42	184
31.	Rembrandt (self-portrait of 1640). *National Gallery*	226
32.	Portrait of a Young Girl. *Lanckoronski Collection, Vienna*	230
33.	The Lesson on Anatomy. *The Hague*	238
34.	The Sortie, or Night Watch. *Amsterdam*	244
35.	Landscape with the Ruin on the Hill. *Cassel*	250
36.	Rembrandt (self-portrait). *Lord Ilchester's Collection*	256
37.	Study of an Aged Woman. *St. Petersburg*	278
38.	The Supper at Emmaus. *Louvre*	288

PLATE		To face page
39.	The Labourers in the Vineyard. *St. Petersburg*	306
40.	Danaë. *St. Petersburg*	308
41.	Bathsheba. *Louvre*	310
42.	The Conjuration of Claudius Civilis. *Stockholm*	312
43.	The Family. *Brunswick*	314
44.	Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph. *Cassel*	318
45.	Portrait of Jan Six. *Six Collection, Amsterdam*	322

ERRATA

P. 124, line 4, *for* "Plate B" *read* "Plate 18."
P. 196, „ 2, *for* "23" *read* "22."
P. 197, „ 12, *for* "24" *read* "23."
P. 206, in footnote, *for* "67" *read* "6, 7."

CHAPTER I

REMBRANDT'S WORK, AND THE METHOD OF ITS STUDY

Rembrandt's artistic output. The chief modern writings upon his art and his life.

Plan of the present study. The questions to be asked about an artist: the general position of his art, his personal life in relation to his work, the extent and range of his productions, their aesthetic value. These questions as applied in the case of Rembrandt: how the book seeks to answer them. The general impression of Rembrandt's genius.

Rembrandt's work as an artist is represented by between five and six hundred extant pictures, nearly three hundred etchings, and about fifteen hundred drawings, and of these productions very many, at any rate of the pictures, are among the most familiar examples of modern art. For his life we have a considerable body of information, that consists partly in official and other documents, most of which are now accessible in print, and partly in biographical notices written by those who knew him or had heard about him from his friends and pupils. The most important of these notices are by Sandrart, Baldinucci, and Houbraken. Criticisms of Rembrandt's artistic style by those who wrote not long after his time are also available, and the references in Félibien, de Piles, and Lairesse may

be mentioned. De Piles, who published in 1699 his biographical notes and reflexions on the painters, shows most appreciation of the master's genius.[1]

There are three books on Rembrandt of recent date which deal on a monumental scale with the artist's life and works as a whole, or with important aspects of these. That by Dr. Bode, the publication of which began in 1897 and was only completed in 1906, though it is called, in its English form, *The Complete Work of Rembrandt*,[2] only deals with the master's pictorial achievement, and with the facts of his career, leaving the etchings and drawings unnoticed. All aspects of Rembrandt's artistic activity, and all the facts known at the time about his life, are comprehensively treated in Emile Michel's volume of 600 pages, entitled *Rembrandt; sa Vie, son Œuvre, et son Temps*, which appeared in 1893, and was immediately translated into English;[3] while a less comprehensive but more intimate treatment of the theme is contained in Carl Neumann's *Rembrandt*, the fruit of close personal study of the master's genius from the philosophical standpoint.[4] These works all build upon the foundations laid in previous monographs, of which the first in point of time was the essay by Kolloff published in von Raumer's *Historisches*

1 These notices have recently been reprinted in convenient form in Dr. Hofstede de Groot's *Urkunden über Rembrandt*, 1575–1721, Haag, 1906. In what follows they are for the sake of convenience cited from the pages of the *Urkunden*.

2 Paris, Sedelmeyer, 1897–1906, eight volumes, containing reproductions of about 550 extant paintings with descriptive commentary, and a general study of Rembrandt as a painter. The last volume includes original documents and other matter of value.

3 Paris, Hachette. English edition, London, Heinemann, 1894.

4 Berlin and Stuttgart, W. Spemann, 1902.

Taschenbuch for 1854. Not long after this followed the epoch-making work of Vosmaer, *Rembrandt, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*,[1] the merit of which was that with an appreciative critique of Rembrandt's art it united a broad view of the master's life and surroundings in the Holland of the seventeenth century. Vosmaer used the documentary evidence, the publication of which had been going on for some time before Scheltema issued his collection of *pièces justificatives* in 1853,[2] as well as the aesthetic material contributed by Bürger in his *Musées de la Hollande*.[3] To this material Fromentin made important contributions in his remarkable essay *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*[4] that has done more than any other book to teach the intelligent public of Europe and America what the art of painting really means.

The work that Vosmaer accomplished for the historical aspects of Rembrandt's career was essayed from the standpoint of the evolution of his art in the *Studien zur Geschichte der Holländischen Malerei* of Dr. Bode, which appeared in 1883.[5] Not only did this contain a more systematic analysis of Rembrandt's painting than had before been attempted; but by its treatment of the early Dutch school and its relation to northern painting in general it exhibits Rembrandt's achievement for the first time in its proper artistic setting. The same scholar's recently published *Rembrandt und seine Zeitgenossen*[6] envisages Rembrandt's work in its relation to his contem-

1 La Haye, Nijhoff, 1868; second edition, enlarged, 1877.

2 *Rembrandt*, Amsterdam; French edition by (Thoré) Bürger, enlarged, Paris, 1866.

3 Paris, 1858, 1860.

4 Paris, 1876.

5 Braunschweig, Vieweg und Sohn.

6 Leipzig, Seemann, 1906.

poraries rather than, as was the case with the *Studien*, to his predecessors. Apart from these and other works which deal generally with Rembrandt's artistic position, there is a considerable literature concerned specially with his etchings, and more than one work contains reproductions of all of these, while important studies on his drawings, as well as a full catalogue, have recently appeared. References to these publications will be given in later chapters.

The limited scope of a volume like the present renders necessary a selection of topics, and the matter of it is so arranged that each topic is treated separately in such a way as to secure as far as possible its clear presentation. Each section of the book attempts to deal with one of the questions about Rembrandt which those attracted to his work would wish to have answered. Some of these questions are biographical, others questions of historical fact and statistic, and others again concern aesthetic and technical considerations. In many artistic biographies on a comprehensive plan, the personal, the historical, and the aesthetic aspects of the subject are embraced in a single scheme, and the reader passes backwards and forwards between the characteristic anecdote and the higher artistic criticism in a way that is somewhat confusing. It is sometimes better to collect into one place all that has to be said about an artist's external life, and into others the main points of interest about his intuition of nature or his technique, than to mix up these very different topics in a single chapter.

The first question to be asked about an artist is the place of his work in the general history of the art he practised.

The general history of an art is in part a matter of development within the art itself. Music, for example, obeys in its progress an inner law of evolution, according to which Bach succeeds Palestrina and Beethoven Bach, while Wagner introduces fresh forms that again stimulate other and younger masters to new experiments. So the successive phases of painting grow each out of the last, and the fifteenth century in Italy builds upon the work of the fourteenth and prepares for the cinquecento, while the age of Velasquez and Rembrandt represents a further transformation of the ideals of that of Titian and Raphael.

But the history of an art, though it obeys this inner law, is by no means independent of outward considerations. The art of every country and epoch reflects the social conditions under which it rose and flourished, and is coloured by the intellectual and religious ideas of its entourage. Art must therefore be viewed in relation to the external phenomena of its *milieu* as well as to the inner law of change already referred to. About every great artist accordingly we want to know, first of all, where his art stands in this self-determined scheme of evolution; and, next, what outward influences of a social and intellectual kind were brought to bear on it.

Approaching then the artist's personality, we have to deal with a complex being who was not only a practician but a man, and a man with character, education, health, fortunes, all of which may have affected to a greater or lesser degree his performance. It is always an interesting, but often a difficult task, to adjust the relations between an artist's life and his work. In the case of some the two seem in perfect accord, and as the art is so is the man.

Titian and Dürer and Raphael will at once occur as examples. In the case of others there is a contrast, while both the life and the art, though pitched in different keys, are well-ordered and harmonious unities. For example, the mind dwells with the same sense of satisfaction on the life as on the work of Rubens, though the system and control of the one seems so little like what we should expect from the painter of such passionate and stormy themes.

There are other artists again whose achievement in colour or form appears something apart from themselves, so little do their broken life and disordered fortunes accord with the serene and sustained greatness of their art. Turner was one of these, and another was Rembrandt. We cannot ignore the personality of these men and profess to attend to their technical output alone. They were not mere machines for grinding out a certain number of beautiful effects in paint. The more highly we value their gift to us in art, the greater is the obligation to consider them in all piety and respect as men. Rembrandt, at any rate, forces his personality upon our notice, and in his multifarious self-portraits he challenges us to say what manner of being he was. As we proceed we shall see reason to believe that Rembrandt's artistic genius was so powerful, the inner law of its development so irresistible in its working, that his art would have been the same if his surroundings and fortunes had been different. There are certain natures which can live in religion or philosophy or art, and with perfect unconcern can let the storms and sunshine of their outward lot play upon them as they will. The view taken in these chapters is that Rembrandt's

nature was of this kind; that he lived a serene inward life, saddened no doubt but not broken or even disturbed by the vicissitudes of fortune; and that the artistic production mirrored this central calm rather than the chances and changes we read of in his biography. The biography is not really to any appreciable extent to be followed in the art, but this does not imply that the biography is to the student of Rembrandt a matter of no concern. On the contrary, in any case, whether or not the outward life directly influenced the art, the life in itself, as that of a creative artist of supreme genius, the greatest man of his nation, is a worthy subject of study, and no book on Rembrandt the artist is complete without a proportionate treatment of Rembrandt the man.

About an artist's actual output we may ask two questions. We may, on the one hand, inquire into the extent and range of his powers, the subjects that occupied his fancy, the technical methods he favoured, the amount and the character of his achievement; and we may on the other hand ask a far more searching and intimate question which regards the actual artistic value of what he has done. What were his individual qualities of eye and hand; how deeply into the secrets of nature did he penetrate; to what diviner issues did the creative imagination in him work? On the material side, so to say, the output of two artists may be almost the same, while the aesthetic value of the two products may be widely different. For example, Hals and van der Helst were both alike painters of 'corporation' pieces and single portraits, who may in many cases have had actually before them the same sitters. Materially their products would be described in almost identical terms,

yet Hals and van der Helst make quite different artistic appeals, and criticism sets their productions far asunder. Again, to take another instance, if we compare Turner and Corot from the point of view of the extent and variety of their output the French artist sinks almost into insignificance, whereas the exquisite quality and fine reserve of the work of the less ambitious and versatile painter raises him in the estimation of some critics even above his great English rival. So too Rembrandt may have been a less exquisite painter than Velasquez, but his range was far wider. With Rembrandt especially is it necessary to distinguish between the merely material facts of his art and the personal artistic statement. To paint Scripture subjects in a natural homely fashion was a characteristic of the whole northern school of painting from van Eyck and Dürer downwards, while the particular rendering we connect with the name of Rembrandt was Rembrandt's own.

The reader will note that in the arrangement here adopted an attempt is made to take up these questions in order, and to find for each as distinct an answer as the nature of the case allows. It is of course impossible rigidly to divide an artist's life or works into compartments, but a certain separation of topics is conducive to clearness. In the chapter which follows this there is a brief sketch of the general history of painting in its most important period from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the object of which is to place Rembrandt in his true position in the development of the art for which he accomplished so much, while at the same time a general review is offered of his artistic activity in its broadest aspects. The third

chapter touches on some of the more important features of the life of the artist's time and country, so as to enable us to reconstitute in thought the social surroundings and the mental atmosphere in which Rembrandt grew up to maturity. In the fourth and fifth, the outward life of the artist forms the theme, and this is dealt with somewhat fully as a continuous story with only incidental references to his art. On Rembrandt's outward fortunes considerable light has been thrown by the publication of original records of an official or legal kind, which enable us to set up certain landmarks in his career, and at the same time to clear away sundry misconceptions which have obscured the truth both about the artist's character and his fortunes. Some of these records published by Scheltema, Vosmaer, and others, have long been known, while others have comparatively recently seen the light in the pages of the valuable periodical *Oud Holland*, and are being brought together and edited in volumes of the *Quellenstudien zur Holländischen Kunstgeschichte*, under the editorship of Dr. Hofstede de Groot. One of these volumes, entitled '*Die Urkunden über Rembrandt*,' published in 1906, will be often referred to in what follows.

We now know that after the death of his wife Saskia, Rembrandt foolishly allowed himself to form irregular connections, one of which involved him in a breach of promise suit, while the other brought him under Church notice. As a result of this, and for other reasons, Rembrandt lost most of his friends, and was also involved in financial disasters which clouded the latter part of his life. There is much of human interest and even of beauty in the relations to him in these later years of his son Titus and

of his faithful associate Hendrickje Stoffels,[1] but fate cut short their lives before his own, and he died almost alone, almost in penury, and wholly obscure. The contrast of this shaken and saddened life with the art which developed in serene magnificence to the latest hour, is one of the most striking that the history of human achievement has to offer, and if it be only to bring this contrast into view the story of Rembrandt's fortunes is worth unfolding.

A point not to be overlooked in the relation of Rembrandt's surroundings to his art is the identification of his models in the various persons of his entourage. This is a comparatively recent branch of Rembrandt investigation, but its results have already added much to the interest of many of his works.[2] His mother and his wife Saskia have all along been known, though they have both been seen far too often —the former in every old, the later in every young woman on his canvases. Now however father and sister, brother and son with their wives, Rembrandt's mistresses and Rembrandt's babies, are all being recognized, and new links of connection are thus established between the master's life and his art.

The remaining chapters of the book deal with the subject of Rembrandt's art in the two aspects which have been already indicated. If the figure be allowed, these two aspects correspond to what may be termed the statics and the dynamics of Rembrandt's art. Chapters six to nine are mainly descriptive and give an idea of the extent and

1 Plate 1 reproduces the master's attractive study of Hendrickje at a window in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum at Berlin.

2 On this subject may be consulted, Valentiner, *Rembrandt und Seine Umgebung*, Strassburg, 1905.

PLATE 1.—HENDRICKJE STOFFELS AT A WINDOW
Berlin

To face p. 10

character of Rembrandt's artistic output, divided for the sake of convenience under the three headings drawings, etchings, and pictures. Chapters ten and eleven on the other hand are purely critical and seek to answer the question, the last but by far the most important of the questions proposed, What is Rembrandt's artistic message to the world? This is the searching and intimate question, that is sooner or later asked about every artist, and the answer to it may leave one artist amidst a crowd of his compeers, and elevate another in solitary grandeur above his kind.

In this case the answer is not doubtful. Rembrandt was not one of many, but an artist of exceptional genius; original both in the conception and execution of his work; from the technical point of view equal with the greatest, one indeed of two or three painters whose votaries dispute for them the palm of absolute pre-eminence in the most difficult and most fascinating of the arts. He was even more than this. He was an inspired thinker, whose creations in form and colour are instinct with life and meaning. He was large of heart and large of brain, and as he speaks to us we recognize a master's utterance, that comes home to our consciousness with a significance that is both human and ideal.

Nothing could be further from the intention of the present study than to represent Rembrandt as an artist of flawless achievement. If such a being as a 'faultless painter' have ever existed, Rembrandt certainly cannot claim the title. Like every artist of wide range, who is for ever being attracted to some new aspect of nature's infinite beauty, he was prone to experiment, and a brilliant

success might be followed by a comparative failure, or by efforts in which there is something forced and artificial. When not inspired to any of his daring flights, he might become uninteresting, and there are Rembrandt conventions, both in design and technique, into which his work would at times contentedly sink. He had little or no sense of the beauty of the human figure from the point of view of structure and function; and had he possessed this he would have kept his inimitable flesh painting as fine as ever, but would have saved his admirers some painful moments. There was a vein of coarseness in his nature, and this at times affects both the conception and the handling of his themes. Rembrandt however possesses a power that is the truest test of greatness, the power of kindling in us by his art a glow of admiration that is not cooled by a dispassionate review of his imperfections. We can criticize him as freely as we criticize Shakespeare and yet keep his great image before our mental vision as one of the supreme imaginative artists of the world.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF REMBRANDT IN MODERN PAINTING

The advance towards modern painting in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Futility of Italian 'Naturalism.' Elsheimer brings northern painting to Rome about 1600. Elsheimer's style: his indirect influence on Rembrandt. Rembrandt and the democratic tendency of modern painting. Rembrandt as an impressionist. Meaning of this term in connection with the act of seeing. The ideals of impressionist painting. Rembrandt as representative of modern art.

The evolution of modern painting could not have been perfected in the Italian schools.

It is true that in the fifteenth century the study of perspective had solved for the Italian artist the problem of representing on a surface of two dimensions a solid form of three, while the few selected objects, to which early design had been confined, were now grouped with others and set in their natural surroundings. It is true also that aerial perspective, coming to the aid of linear, enabled the illusion of distance to be easily and effectively conveyed, so that the painter came to take an entirely new view of nature. His objective was no longer the few selected forms flattened as far as might be against a near perpendicular plane, but a horizontal plane that stretched

away into the distance, charged on every successive parallel with figures and objects infinite in number and in variety of tone and line. This of itself represented an immense advance, but the Italians of the sixteenth century carried the art still further and opened up new fields for its future triumphs.

A treatment of light-and-shade, bolder on the one side and on the other more searching and subtle, was one sign of change, and another was the treatment of secular subjects from ordinary life, side by side with the established religious and classical themes. The attention paid to landscape, first of all by the Flemings and then by the Venetians, prepared the way for one of the most characteristic developments of modern painting; while the somewhat meticulous insistence on details and accessories, which marked many of the Florentines, as well as the Flemings, was of importance in enlarging the scope of graphic representation, and bringing the world in general rather than the few selected objects under the artist's view. In the oil technique the Venetians improved on the practice of the Flemings, till they evolved a medium that lent itself to a variety in effect and to individual methods in handling, of which earlier painters had never dreamed.

For the creation of modern painting more than this was needed. A change was required in the spirit as well as in the form of the art, and this demanded from the Italian an abandonment of his whole attitude of mind towards the objective of his art. Italian painting was incurably aristocratic. The ambition of its votaries was to impart fitting and noble action and expression to the characters in the sacred drama, or the heroes and heroines of the upper

circles of paganism. Whether or not they could achieve true grandeur of treatment, their themes had at any rate inherent in them the dignity for which the Italian genius craved. When attempts were made by the Italian 'naturalists' to treat in the modern style subjects from ordinary life, the result was too often an unreal and inflated design. The scale is as a rule too large for the themes, the treatment of figures too reminiscent of the 'grand style' developed on apostles and heroes. By about the year 1600, while the inspiration of the older Italian schools of religious art was exhausted, and, everywhere but at Venice, they had sunk into lifeless conventionality, the so-called 'naturalist' schools had made it abundantly evident that they could supply no elements of real freshness and movement to re-vivify the stiffening body of orthodox practice.

An important moment in the history of modern painting is marked by the sojourn in Rome about the year 1600 of Adam Elsheimer, a German artist from Frankfort who brought to Italy an art charged with the feeling of the northern schools.

This feeling may be described by the French word *intimité*. The traditions of the northern art were more democratic than those of the art of Italy, and a homely warmth of feeling in connection with subjects from human life took the place of the grandeur and beauty that had their homes south of the Alps. Elsheimer worked on a small scale with great minuteness of finish, and united figures with landscape so that tiny personages, beautifully drawn and painted with enamel-like smoothness of surface, disported themselves in the foreground of wooded scenes,

in the distance of which rose rocky peaks against a sky flecked with clouds. The personages might be introduced merely to enliven or furnish the scene, but very often one would recognize in them some of the same heroes of biblical or classical story that were normally displayed the size of life on the canvases of the Carracci. The stories commonly drawn upon are those in which the interest is homely and human; the subjects of Tobit, of the Good Samaritan, of the Flight into Egypt, of Philemon and Baucis occur. The landscape is Italian studied from scenes within easy reach of Rome, and the figures, often represented in the nude, are from Raphaelesque originals; but there is a poetic feeling for nature in the backgrounds, and a naïvety and charm in the sprightly little figures, that delight us to-day, and were all the more attractive to the Italians of the time that they had for them the merit of novelty.

Noteworthy are Elsheimer's schemes of lighting. His pictures are as a rule rather dark, and he is fond of moonlight effects and of artificial light from conflagrations, as in the 'Burning of Troy' at Munich, and from torches or watch-fires. Bode indeed says of him that he 'chooses by preference the most complicated and effective motives of lighting that he can devise.'[1] Whether his figures be in the open air or in interiors, at a dusky or a bright period of the twenty-four hours, they are strongly modelled in what would be called to-day a studio lighting, and he has no predilections for those even effects of illumination, admitting of no dark shadows, to which artists of the modern 'plein air' school have introduced us.

In no one of these characteristics was Elsheimer in the

[1] *Studien zur Geschichte der Holländischen Malerei*, p. 269.

strict sense an innovator. Italians such as Correggio had introduced a playful, genre-like treatment of Scriptural themes; and these had been represented by Venetians like Giovanni Bellini on decorative panels of small dimensions. The Flemings had painted beautiful landscapes with a subject in the foreground; figures on a minute scale appear in the works of Elsheimer's predecessors in the northern schools, such as his own master, Uffenbach. What struck the artists at Rome as novel was not we may be sure his execution, for early Flemish pictures still more finely wrought were familiar to the Italians. The importance of Elsheimer lay in the fact that he brought these characteristics of the newer painting together and as it were crystallized them in his own work, while the poetry of his landscape and the intimate feeling in his figure pieces, though not new in the northern schools, came to the Italians with a look of freshness. The position that his winning personality had secured for him at Rome made what he did conspicuous, so that Sandrart, writing, it is true, half-a-century later and in somewhat extravagant terms, says that 'in all Rome nothing was talked of but the newly invented style of painting of Elsheimer.'

It is worth while devoting some little attention to Elsheimer, as a representative of the changing fashions in painting at the opening of the seventeenth century, because a knowledge of his art obviates the necessity of analysing the work of other predecessors of Rembrandt. It is true that there is no evidence of direct contact on the part of Rembrandt with the works of Elsheimer, no one of which is mentioned in the inventory of the Dutch master's artistic collections, but almost every one of the characteristics of

the former artist appears in the work of Rembrandt, and may have been transmitted to him through artistic intermediaries. It is a fact not to be lost sight of that a pupil of Elsheimer was the master of Pieter Lastman, one of the two early instructors of Rembrandt.

A whole class of Rembrandt's pictures, of which the 'Simeon' at the Hague (Plate 2) is typical, are small in scale and are executed with great minuteness, though rarely with the enamel-like smoothness of Elsheimer. They display motives from Holy Writ, with a distinct preference for scenes and stories of homely interest, and in any case deal with them with warmth of feeling and from the human side. Classical themes alternate with those from the Bible, though the latter are by far the most numerous. In one or two instances we have numerous minute figures in the foreground of a broad landscape. 'The Rape of Europa,' 'Diana and Callisto', 'The Finding of Moses,' are examples.[1] The solemn pathos of many of Rembrandt's landscape studies is felt in Elsheimer's. The latter artist's beautiful 'Flight into Egypt' at Munich is the prototype of Rembrandt's picture of the same subject in the National Gallery of Ireland. At Munich it is night, and the full moon is reflected in a lake in the right foreground. Joseph holds a lighted torch in his hand as he leads the ass with its precious burden through the shallow water. Hard by there is a fire burning, beside which shepherds are seated. Dark heavy trees close in the scene. Rembrandt's piece is more Turneresque in its romantic suggestion but its likeness to Elsheimer's is unmistakable. The watch-fire with the shepherds is duly in evidence. How suggestive again

[1] See postea, Chapter VIII.

PLATE 2.—SIMEON, OR THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE
The Hague

To face p. 18

of one of Rembrandt's interiors is the Dresden Elsheimer, in which Philemon and Baucis are entertaining the gods in a room where the light, entering through a single window, loses itself in the dusky spaces!

The strong studio lighting retained even in open-air scenes is another point of similarity. Nowhere does this appear more strikingly than in a picture by Elsheimer representing the Baptism of Christ in the collection of Mr. H. Wagner.[1] The scene transpires of course in broad daylight, yet the figures are modelled in boldest light and shade, which are at their strongest on the forms of the child angels that hover in a ring above the chief figures. In the immediate foreground to the right is a figure almost startlingly like one that meets us over and over again in Rembrandt's compositions. It is entirely in shadow against a background of sun-lighted figures in the middle distance, to which it serves as a repoussoir. The device is thoroughly in Rembrandt's manner.

On the whole, if one remember the work of the painters of the generation before Rembrandt, who are sometimes adduced to explain his art, of painters such as Lastman and Swanenburch, Leonard Bramer, Jacob Pynas, Jan and Esaias van de Velde, Hercules Seghers, there is little of importance in it that is not to be found also in Elsheimer, who may justly be regarded as representative of the whole school of Rembrandt's precursors in those features of his art which are not wholly original.

In certain qualities of conception and handling Rembrandt carries on these innovations on the orthodox practice of the Italian schools, for which Adam Elsheimer

1 Exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1906.

received much of the credit. In qualities which were more strictly his own, he did not merely initiate a change but went far to transform the whole character of the art he and his northern predecessors and the Italians practised in common. With the last the aim was always the clear presentation, whether on one plane or many, of objects intrinsically noble and beautiful. The northern artists, more democratic, cared less about this intrinsic value in the things represented, and took a wider outlook upon nature as a whole, while Rembrandt established the principle on which the most characteristic modern painting is based, that the field of representation is absolutely boundless, and intrinsic quality of no importance at all. Rembrandt's practice is indeed the best justification of Constable's famous remark when he denied that there was anything ugly in nature. Whatever an object might be in itself, he explained, when looked at from the right point of view, or under a certain effect of light-and-shade and colour, it could always be made to appear beautiful. To discern this beauty and to give effect in art to what is seen, is the secret of success in modern painting, and no one has done more than Rembrandt to enable artists to see and to render what is thus made the new objective of the painter.

Rembrandt's position as an artist in face of the external world cannot be stated without the introduction of the often misused term 'Impressionism.'

The word is often vaguely employed and not seldom with a depreciatory meaning. Impressionism is spoken of as a sort of device for imposing on the public by blurring or smudging forms that the artist is incapable of grasping

or rendering in their truth. This is not the real sense of impressionism, which has a very distinct and sober significance, and betokens a certain manner of viewing and of representing nature that has been known and used from the seventeenth century downwards. It is based ultimately on the phenomena of human vision, as these are explained by scientific writers such as Helmholtz.[1]

Every one knows that the act of 'seeing' may mean one or two different things. (1) We may allow our glance to travel leisurely over the field of vision, viewing the objects one by one and forming a clear mental picture of each in turn. Or (2) we may try to take in the whole field of vision at a glance, ignoring the separate objects and trying to frame before ourselves a summary representation of the whole. Or again (3) we may choose a single point in the field of vision and focus on that our attention, allowing the surrounding objects to group themselves in an indistinct general mass. We can look at nature in any one of these ways. Each is as legitimate as the others, but since in most ordinary cases we look at things in order to gain information about them, our vision is usually of the first, or, as we may say, the analytical kind, in which we explore the objects successively, noting in the case of each in turn its individual characteristic.

All painters of the Italian schools, and the majority of painters at all times, represent nature in a way that corresponds to this analytical vision. They are of course careful of the general effect to which they duly subordinate

1 E.g. Helmholtz, *Popular Lectures on Scientific Subjects*, First Series, translated, London, 1884. 'The eye as an optical instrument,' p. 188 f.

the individual objects, but these objects are none the less of importance in themselves, and the just delineation of the special characteristics of each is a large part of the aim of the artist.

Since the seventeenth century however, side by side with the delineators, there have worked men who were comparatively careless as to what the various objects before them were in themselves, but were intensely sensitive to the effect of them all together in a mass, or grouped round the special point on which their vision was focussed. The men who see and who render nature in this fashion are the impressionists; one of the first of them in point of time was Frans Hals of Haarlem, and the captains of them are Rembrandt and Velasquez.

The first thing therefore that the impressionist does as distinct from the delineator is to generalize.

Let us understand in the second place that this comparative neglect of detail does not imply a careless or merely superficial way of regarding nature. To the impressionist objects present themselves not so much by their contours as by their light-and-shade and colour, and nature becomes not a collection of defined objects but a varied appearance of tone and tint in which forms are only partially discernible. If contours be no longer followed with scrupulous accuracy the painter may seem to be saved a considerable amount of trouble, but the saving is only in appearance. Just as much anxious care as another would take about his outlines the impressionist painter devotes to the task of securing truth in the subtle relations of these tones and tints to each other. The exact degree of light and shade on an object is far more difficult to render with

accuracy than its outline, and it is just as important in conveying the truth of the object to the spectator.

Hence, as the second point, the impressionist seeks to compass absolute truth of tone and colour in his rendering of this generalized view of nature.

In the third place, impressionism should result in beauty, though not the intrinsic beauty of form aimed at in their art by the Greeks and Italians.

In proportion as the different patches and lines that now make up the picture become less and less identifiable with distinct objects in nature, they are made in themselves more lovely to the eye through delicate transitions of tone and broken tints of subtlest colouring. In the play of golden lights that flash in and out of the amber and brown of the hair and dress and background of Rembrandt's 'Portrait of a Girl' (Hendrickje) in the Salon Carré of the Louvre we do not stop to ask the exact fashion of the lady's jewels or coiffure. Corot is comparatively careless as to what his patches and tints represent. It suffices if they so far suggest nature as to touch the right chord of poetic association in the spectator, but as elements in a composition of tone and colour they are the objects of his most fastidious care.

The impressionist piece is, therefore, not only generalized, but in the highest degree decoratively pleasing to the eye as well as convincing in its truth. It may also be much more than this. It may involve a creative act of the imagination, which in seeing nature discerns in her an artistic idea, so that what is rendered back is not nature only but a poetic conception of nature that is something new and precious.

Here comes in the distinction among the three great painters who have just been placed at the head of the impressionist school.

Of this activity of the artistic imagination there is little trace in Hals. In his technique he is one of the most individual of painters, but his vision of nature is quite dispassionate. He appears to have taken in at a glance the general truth of the piece of nature before him, and to give it back in a vivid and forcible rendering that is uncoloured by his own artistic personality. The other great painters just mentioned are not so purely receptive. They fuse the varied elements of a scene into an impression in which there is as much of themselves as there is of nature. It is this which constitutes their greatness. So far as concerns mastery over the forms of nature and technical facility in giving these back with spirit and accuracy, Hals has no superior. That which the painter of Haarlem could see he could render with inimitable verve and unerring truthfulness, but his vision was limited and prosaic.

What Rembrandt and Velasquez saw was not merely a collection of material objects but a certain artistic scheme into which these objects tended to group themselves. Velasquez seems to view all things in a more or less even light, bathed in an atmosphere in which contours are lost and local tints become generalized into one harmonious greyness, but he saw them always as a picture, essentially in their paintable aspects. He excels all artists in his gift for seeing a picture in the group of objects, which Hals would have treated without establishing among them the perfect artistic harmony that makes such a unity of a fine canvas of Velasquez.

PLATE 3.—PEN DRAWINGS OF A LAME BEGGAR
British Museum

To face p. 24

Rembrandt looks at nature in quite a different way. In some of his most characteristic work he exemplifies that habit of vision in which one focal point is selected, and all the attention directed on this. The selected objects are brought out in all their plastic fulness, while all the others within the field are merely suggested, like the dress and accessories of the 'Girl' in the Louvre. In both these cases we have to do with a reading of nature that belongs to the painter's own individuality, and is the work of his artistic imagination giving form to the impression received from without.

Hence a fine picture of the modern school, of which Rembrandt is one of the heads, not only conveys with truth and with an effect of decorative beauty the generalized impression of nature, but is a work of the imagination, in which the subject has been conceived as a whole in the artist's mind, that is creatively active during the whole process both of seeing and rendering.

What has here been termed impressionism was impossible to the Italians. It implied a surrender of the 'thing in itself' as the objective in painting, and the adoption instead of the 'effect,' wherein objects lose their individual intrinsic importance and take on themselves an artistic importance of another kind, which depends on their grouping, lighting, colour-relations, and other accidents of the moment. The classically trained artist could not easily bring himself to this, and the importance of Rembrandt resides in the fact that, while not the first to adopt the more democratic position, he was the first to show by his own achievement that painting on these new lines could produce results as splendid and attractive as any

that had marked its Italian period. When Rembrandt takes for the subject of his chalk or etching-needle a picturesque but tattered beggar, or a bristly hog lying ready for slaughter (Plates 3 and 4), he is asserting the artistic value of themes which in themselves would not arrest the ordinary eye as things of beauty. Rembrandt's special effects of lighting, his bold and varied handling, his representation of textures, his broken colouring, are all means towards the one end, the demonstration of the hidden beauty of nature, which only the painter's eye can see and only the painter's hand delineate.

PLATE 4.—THE HOG. ETCHING, B. 157

To face p. 26

CHAPTER III

THE SURROUNDINGS OF REMBRANDT

Holland in the seventeenth century: its position in Europe and in the world at large. Wealth and importance of Amsterdam. Sir Thomas Overbury's description of the Dutch people early in the century. Wealth of the country as leading to the encouragement of art. The dealers. The demand for portraits, both single and in groups. The Dutch 'Corporation' pictures. Influence of religion upon art. Rembrandt as Protestant and Mennonite. Character of his religious paintings. The Jewish community at Amsterdam and Rembrandt's relation to it. The literary culture of the age. Classicism in literature and in art. Rembrandt's use of the allegorical style.

Surprise is sometimes expressed that so great an artist as Rembrandt passed all his time 'in such a little country' as Holland, 'so far from the great centres,' and that he was not attracted to Italy or even to Flanders is regarded in some quarters as a sign of eccentricity. But Italy, though supreme, at any rate in repute, as an artistic centre, was in all the elements that made the life of the seventeenth century absolutely devitalized; while since the beginning of the troubles between Spain and the Netherlands Flanders had retrograded. Antwerp about the time of Rembrandt's birth possessed only a shadow of its former greatness. It 'had become a deserted harbour through the closing of the Scheldt. It was a decayed country town, numerous still

in population, but even in that point suffering a daily loss from emigration.'[1] The contrast in the early part of the seventeenth century between the southern or Catholic provinces and those of the north was most striking and was all in favour of Holland. If the trading towns of the north so far surpassed the once opulent and splendid Flemish cities, it is clear that they would be at least equal to any centres of secular life in Western Europe, and, as we shall see presently, a contemporary authority reckoned Amsterdam at the beginning of the seventeenth century as the greatest commercial city of Christendom.

We must accordingly remember that if Rembrandt never left his native Holland, he yet passed all his life in one or the other of the two chief towns of that country, at the epoch of its most vigorous political and intellectual activity. He was born and brought up at Leyden, which at the beginning of the seventeenth century was second only to Amsterdam in population, and rivalled it in industry; while it surpassed as an intellectual centre all the cities of the Provinces. So soon as he was established in his profession he settled in Amsterdam, where there was all about him the stir of an energetic burgher life that found its chief outlet in a world-wide commerce. The Amsterdam of Rembrandt's days has been called 'Holland in miniature,'[2] and with equal justice might the United Provinces as a whole be termed an epitome of the world of the seventeenth century. All that is distinctive of that

1 P. J. Blok, *History of the People of the Netherlands*, translated, New York, 1900, III, 317.

2 Bredius, etc., *Amsterdam in de Zeventiende Eeuw*, 's Gravenhage, 1897, etc., Voorrede. Plate 5 gives two views near Amsterdam.

a

b

PLATE 5.—*a*. DISTANT VIEW OF AMSTERDAM. ETCHING, B. 210
b, THE GOLD-WEIGHER'S COUNTRY SEAT. ETCHING. B. 231

To face p. 28

century, activity in commerce and inventions, intellectual alertness, the prominence of the citizen and man of trade, religious antagonisms, would have been found there more in evidence than on any other spot of earth. One who then lived in Holland, and in Holland's chief seat of traffic, would have his finger on the pulse of the world, and would feel the currents of the world's life stream to and fro.

This is true, not only of the narrower circle of the European states, but of the outlying regions that were beginning now in men's thoughts to constitute the larger unity with which we have now to reckon. The familiar Dutch names, New Zealand, New Holland, Van Diemen's Land, are living memorials of the times. The Dutch East India Company had been formed in 1602 by the consolidation of existing smaller companies. Amsterdam counted in the company for as much as all the rest of the country together, for the world-commerce of the single city exceeded that of all the other Dutch seaports combined. Though great difficulties were at first experienced, the shares of the East India Company rose within a few years from 100 to 300, and the institution soon became what Dr. Blok calls 'one of the pillars of the commercial prosperity of the Netherland provinces.'

One result of the successful defiance by the United Provinces of the armies of Spain was the tacit recognition that the latter country had no longer the rich West Indies as her own preserve. Hence in 1621 a West India Company was started on the same lines as the earlier one. The Dutch entered Brazil. New Amsterdam was founded in 1626 where is now New York. At one time, after a successful

naval action with a richly laden Spanish fleet off the coast of Cuba, the dividends of the West India Company rose to 50 per cent., and a seventeenth-century writer boasts that Amsterdam could now look down on ancient Rome, for Rome had but one world to exploit, whereas Amsterdam was growing rich on the wealth of two!

On the social condition of Holland at this period, and especially on its superiority to Flanders, the remarks of the Englishman, Sir Thomas Overbury, who visited the two districts in 1609, are very instructive.[1] He first sketches the condition of the northern Netherlands just after the conclusion in the year just mentioned of the twelve years' truce with Spain, by which the independence of the United Provinces was practically established. 'The State,' he says, 'is democratical; the merchant and the tradesman being predominant. . . . Their care in government is very exact and particular, by reason that everyone hath an immediate interest in the State; such is the equality of justice, that it renders every man satisfied; such the public regularity, that a man may see their laws were made to guide, not to entrap. . . . And they still retain that sign of a commonwealth yet uncorrupted, "Private poverty and public wealth"; for no one private man there is exceeding rich, and few very poor; and no State more sumptuous in all public things. . . . There belong to that State twenty thousand vessels of all sorts . . . having at this time three ships to our one, though none so good as our (*i.e.*, the British) best. . . . Now that, whereupon the most part of their revenue and strength depends, is their traffick; in which mystery of

1 Printed in the *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. VIII, p. 362.

State they are at this day the wisest; for all the commodities, that this part of the world wants, and the Indies have, (as, spice, silk, jewels, and gold,) they have become the conveyers of them for the rest of Christendom (except us), as the Venetians were of old: and all those commodities, that those northern countries abound with, and these southern stand in need of, they likewise convey thither; which was the ancient trade of the easterlings (the Hanse towns) . . .

'Their territory contains six entire provinces . . . the ground of which is for the most part fruitful; the towns nowhere so equally beautiful, strong, and rich: which equality grows, by reason that they appropriate some one staple commodity to every town of note. Only Amsterdam not only passeth them all, but even Seville, Lisbon, or any other mart-town in Christendom; and to it is appropriated the trade of the East Indies, where they maintain commonly forty ships; besides which there go twice a year, from it and the adjoining towns, a great fleet to the Baltick Sea. . . .

'Concerning the people: they are neither much devout, nor much wicked; given all to drink, and eminently to no other vice; hard in bargaining but just; surly and respectless, as in all democracies; thrifty, industrious, and cleanly; disheartened upon the least ill success, and insolent upon good; inventive in manufactures, and cunning in traffick.' . . .

Such were the fellow citizens of Rembrandt, such the life that was in full activity all about him. The opulence of the community was favourable to art, and its social constitution and habits created a demand for the particular

forms of art practised by Rembrandt and his compeers. It should be stated that these favourable conditions did not continue through the whole of the seventeenth century, for after the middle of it matters went less well, in a financial sense, for the people, and dealers in works of art who were amassing fortunes while Rembrandt was a young man, at a later period of the century were making acquaintance with the bankruptcy court.[1] In the days however when Rembrandt's career was opening, all was working favourably for the artists. At a later date he etched the portrait of a dealer in works of art, who was his friend, and we see the subject surrounded by pictures and curiosities, which were continually passing at good prices into the habitations of the patricians and merchants of the city. (See Plate 6.)

These same personages were generally ready to have their portraits taken, and not singly only but in groups. The circumstances of the national history in the past half century had quickened the sense of personality in the individual citizen, while the democratic constitution of the state was carried out in the internal administration by the establishment of innumerable boards for the management of institutions and of business generally. The military system was equally democratic, and rested largely on a citizen militia, the members, and especially the officers, of which formed in each local district a closely knit society. It was the custom for the members of these boards and military companies to have their portraits painted in common on large canvases, which were afterwards preserved in the places of meeting of the respective corporations.

[1] Michel, *Rembrandt*, p. 459.

PLATE 6.—ABRAHAM FRANCEN, DEALER IN WORKS OF ART. ETCHING, B. 273

To face p. 32

This habit was well established in the sixteenth century, and there exists an almost incredible number of such pieces in the galleries and public institutions of Holland. These have been carefully analysed by Hermann Riegel in a very instructive paper in his *Beiträge zur Niederländischen Kunstgeschichte*,[1] from which may be learned their general character and the progressive development which they underwent in their artistic aspect.

If portraiture was an art specially encouraged by the social conditions of the time, there were reasons which made another important branch of painting both popular and lucrative. The northern Provinces were a stronghold of the Reformed religion, and accepted to the full its cardinal doctrine, the all-importance of the Scriptures. An open Bible was a common sign over a place of business, and the well-known 'Bible' Hotel at Amsterdam represents the survival of one of these. A knowledge of the text of the Bible was widely diffused among the members of the community, and pictures illustrative of the Old and the New Testament were proportionately popular. These religious pictures might however take several different forms. For centuries past the religious picture had been the staple product of the schools of painting both south and north of the Alps, but in the Germany of the sixteenth and the Holland of the seventeenth century this form of art was to take on itself a new character. The beginning of the influence of the Reformation upon art can be discerned in the later works of Albrecht Dürer, who however remained to the last true to the older ecclesiastical traditions. Holbein, the illustrator of Erasmus, stood defi-

[1] Berlin, 1882, I, 107.

nitely on the Protestant side of the line of cleavage, but Holbein's work for the new religious movement was chiefly destructive, by means of his inimitable satire. For a constructive embodiment of the Protestant idea in art Europe had to wait till the advent of Rembrandt. Rembrandt was the first painter to convey through his design the spirit of Protestant Christianity in its most enlightened form. It was not merely that he took the scenes of the sacred narrative from the human rather than the traditional or ecclesiastical side, for other painters of the northern schools had been doing this for some time past. Rembrandt entered more deeply into the Pauline theology, and conceived of the Divine Fatherhood incorporating itself in the infinite compassion, the all-embracing tenderness, of Christ. This is the significance of the great religious picture, the last painting from his hand, which is given on the frontispiece to this volume. There is here embodied, in the moving presentment of the return of the prodigal to the father whose compassion fails not, the doctrine of a personal relation between the divine and mortal that can best be expressed in the terms of human fatherhood. Now this doctrine is not a church doctrine, for it eliminates the priest and his sacraments; nor is it in the strict sense a Protestant doctrine, for it is as far opposed to the spirit of Calvinism as to the spirit of Rome. The established form of Protestantism in Rembrandt's Holland was strongly Calvinistic, and it is not easy to see how the essentially Pauline creed expressed by his pictures can have been nurtured in Calvinistic surroundings.

The explanation of the seeming paradox is to be found in a curious notice, the truth of which there is no reason to

doubt, contained in the life of Rembrandt contributed by the Italian Baldinucci. 'This artist,' he says, 'professed at that time the religion of the Mennonites, which, though itself also a false one, is nevertheless opposed to that of Calvin, for they are not accustomed to be baptized until the age of thirty . . . and for the rest they live according to their own fancy.'[1] A good part of the internal history of the Provinces in the first half of the seventeenth century is occupied with the religious controversy between the orthodox Calvinists and the Broad Church party, as it may be termed, that took its name from its leader Arminius. These Mennonites,[2] to whom we are told Rembrandt belonged, represented a part of the left wing of the liberal theologians of the day. They were split into various sections but they were in the main anti-dogmatic and anti-Erastian, professing the Bible alone, and at times too easily satisfied, like the Corinthians whom Paul reproves, that they were in a state of grace. Some were strict, forbidding luxury in dress and the bearing of arms, others adopted a free and even lax view of the religious life, protesting that it mattered nothing what creed a man professed, and that the only guide for belief and for life was the Bible.

This is of course an ideal religion for an artist, and though Rembrandt was no theologian, it may well be that his Mennonitism betokens a certain personal choice and interest. We shall see later on how well he knew his Bible, and how broad were his religious sympathies, while some of his portraits will bring us into contact with

1 *Urkunden*, p. 421.

2 The sect still exists, preserving the distinctive adult baptism, and has two places of worship in Amsterdam.

Arminian and Mennonite preachers. Of these last Baldinucci says, 'they (the Mennonites) have no preachers set apart, but avail themselves for the purpose of men of low condition, but such as they personally esteem, men we should call "good men" and "men of honour" (Galantuomini e Giusti).' One of these 'Galantuomini' Rembrandt painted in 1641, in a magnificent picture which has passed from the collection of Lord Ashburnham to the Berlin Museum. It is shown on Plate 7, where we see the preacher, Anslo, addressing a woman seated at his side, who, whether she be his wife or a simple member of his flock, certainly feels for him a personal esteem. In this way Rembrandt's religious art is not only an outcome of the Protestantism of his country, but is connected more intimately with the inner religious life of Amsterdam. It is also connected with another phase of religion represented in that cosmopolitan city.

The comparative prosperity of the revolted provinces and the religious freedom which Protestantism offered, attracted to the north many of the thinkers and workers of the lands still under the dominion of Spain. Leyden owed a great part of its wealth to the influx of cloth workers from Flanders, who helped to raise this industry to such repute that Leyden cloth and baize and other textile fabrics were everywhere in demand. Amsterdam received a valuable addition to its population when Spanish and Portuguese Jews, fleeing from the Inquisition, settled there in large numbers, and produced from their midst men like Manasseh ben Israel and Baruch Spinosa. There needs hardly to be mentioned the debt that Rembrandt's art owes to the Jewish population of Amsterdam.

PLATE 7.—THE MENNONITE PREACHER, ANSLO

Berlin

To face p. 36

The intellectual life of Holland was in Rembrandt's day in full vigour. Scholars from the southern Provinces and from beyond the Netherland borders came to fill chairs in the newly-established University at Leyden. That Academy, the first of its kind in the United Provinces, had been founded in 1575, the year after the famous siege, it was said as a direct reward to the citizens for their constancy under trial.[1] During the seventeenth century its chairs were filled by some of the most notable scholars of the age. Ancient literature was brilliantly represented by Lipsius and Joseph Scaliger, with Heinsius, the latter's pupil, who together established the Leyden school of philology, and in addition raised the standard of liberal education generally in municipal schools, such as that in which the youthful Rembrandt received his first instruction. In the domain of theology, Gomarus on the one side, and on the other Jacob Harmenszoon, better known to the world as Arminius, were classic representatives, the one of the strict and the other of the broad-church views which have divided Protestant churches ever since their time. Hugo Grotius, though he filled no chair at Leyden, was an alumnus of the University, while the modern science of medicine may be said to be founded on the work of Boerhave, whose professorial labours commenced at the Leyden Academy in 1701.

The fortunes of literature in the Netherlands followed those of language, and the contrast in this respect between the Flemish of the southern Provinces and the tongue which we know as Dutch is most significant. 'From the

1 Dr. Blok, loc. cit. III, 85, seems to admit the truth of this somewhat contested statement.

close of the sixteenth century,' writes Dr. Blok, 'Flemish letters sank back to a condition of numbness which lasted more than two centuries. . . . Flemish in general, less than half a century previous the speech of cultivated people, fell, with the intellectual gauge of the nation itself, to a depth that made it scarcely worthy of the name of a language in comparison with the purer speech of the north, or her brilliant rival, French. Soon Flemish was little more than a dialect. . . . It became the language of the peasant and the small burgher, despised by the cultivated.' Dutch on the other hand has won and kept its place as a member of the family of Teutonic tongues, and by Rembrandt's time it was already producing a notable literature. One of the most conspicuous representatives of this was Hooft, who was born in 1581 of a distinguished family of Amsterdam, and educated at the University of Leyden. In 1609, the year of the conclusion of the truce with Spain, he received an official appointment as bailiff of Muiden, and at his residence there he gathered about him a society of those interested in literature and learning who formed what is known as the 'Muiden circle.' Hooft wrote poetry in dramatic and lyrical form, but his chief literary effort was his great *History of the Netherlands* which appeared in 1642. Prior to Hooft's prominence as a literary Maecenas, a circle had been formed in the house of a wealthy merchant of Amsterdam, Roemer Visscher, whose two daughters, Anna and Maria-Tesselschade, born respectively in 1584 and 1594, were women of wit and culture who excelled in music, and in literary exercises, that were not only of a light and graceful kind, for the younger translated Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberated*. A little later, in 1631, G. J. Vossius

and Caspar van Baerle, who had both been professors at Leyden, settled in Amsterdam and added greatly to its literary reputation. The name of Jacob Cats, the poet of familiar life, is known to all the world.

Dutch literature of this period found its chief exponent in Joost van den Vondel, who was born in Cologne in 1587, but was by parentage and residence a Hollander and intimately associated with Amsterdam. Through a long life that was extended till 1679 Vondel expressed himself in almost all forms of poetry, epic, dramatic, and lyric. Of all his works the most interesting, though not the best, is the drama called *Lucifer*, on account of the question which has been raised about the possible debt of Milton to the Dutch poet. *Lucifer* appeared in 1654 and is a political allegory in which the figure of the protagonist covers that of William of Orange, Spain, for Vondel was a Catholic, being represented by the Almighty. Vondel's genius expressed itself best in lyrical form, and he excelled in patriotic songs such as those in which he celebrated the victories of Prince Frederick Henry when, in the second quarter of the century, war was renewed against the Spaniards.

The literary culture of Holland was of course largely dominated by the prevailing classical taste of the times. Orlers[1] describes the elaborate pageant arranged at the inauguration of the Academy at Leyden, wherein figured Neptune, who had just been called in to save the city from her foes, Apollo and the Muses, classical worthies, and personifications such as delighted the older Chambers of Rhetoric of the Flemish boroughs. This same apparatus of allegory weighs down much of the Dutch literature of

[1] *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden*, Leyden, 1614, p. 133 f.

the time, but a purely vernacular style 'racy of the soil' was also in vogue, and even the classicist Heinsius published poems in what Grotius called 'our Dutch mother-tongue.' Hooft and Vondel were both to a great extent classicists though they wrote in the vernacular, and the purely native vein was represented best by Gerbrand Brederoo, who knew no Latin, and poured out popular verses in a rough but vigorous style, and wrote some of the best dramas of the period.

The culture of the time is aptly represented by the well-known personality of Jan Six, for some years the friend of Rembrandt. Six was born in 1618 from a good family that originally came from Cambrai. He filled various public offices at Amsterdam, ending with that of burgomaster, to which he was appointed in 1691, but his chief interest was in literature and art. He became at Amsterdam a recognized arbiter of taste, and was strongly imbued with the classicism of the age. In 1648 he published a drama on an antique theme entitled *Medea*, for which Rembrandt designed a frontispiece. In an epigram from his own pen intended for his picture, perhaps the famous one by Rembrandt, he writes of himself as 'a votary of the Muses from his tender years.' The scholarly laird of Hillegom is generally called 'burgomaster Six,' and many people no doubt imagine him a man of commerce with aldermanic ways, rather than the refined connoisseur, as Rembrandt portrayed him in his famous etching.

In the art of painting, if we take Europe as a whole, classical tradition was as strong as in literature, but Holland was exceptional in the possession of a school of what may be termed vernacular art, the productions of which in the

first half of the seventeenth century quite put into the shade those of the classicists. Rembrandt by no means stood alone as representing an art of native growth independent of Italian models. He was surrounded by a goodly company of painters as Dutch as he was himself, each one of whom was within his own limited range a master unsurpassed.[1] In the latter half of the century however the strength was passing out of the school, and the Netschers and van der Werffs were superseding artists like Terborch and Jan Steen. At this period there was not only the traditional classicism of the Italian Renaissance to be reckoned with, but that colder, more formal classicism associated with the régime of Louis XIV of France. Already in Rembrandt's lifetime some of his best pupils were forgetting all they had learned from their master, and adopting the traditional classic that was to rule the world of art for more than a century. This fact explains in great part the neglect of Rembrandt's painting in the later years of his life about which more will be said in the sequel. Rembrandt himself became more sovereignly independent in his work as time went on, and his absolute indifference to the change in public taste is a marked feature in his character as artist. Baldinucci says of him that 'while he was at work he would not have given audience to the greatest monarch upon earth,'[2] and public opinion, which is sometimes called 'the supreme arbiter,' affected him just as little. Rembrandt of course painted classical subjects, but he treated them in his own fashion. There are however one or two of his works in

1 Bode's *Rembrandt und Seine Zeitgenossen*, Leipzig, 1906, is the latest and best work on Rembrandt's contemporaries.

2 *Urkunden*, p. 422.

which, probably owing to the influence of Rubens, he used some of the conventional machinery of allegory so dear to the classicists. The most conspicuous instance is the design he made for the celebration of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. We possess it in the form of an oil sketch in monochrome with the background coloured, in the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam. The chief part of the field is occupied with a company of mediaeval knights and men-at-arms who are repulsing an enemy from the walls of a fortress that represents the United Provinces. There is picturesqueness and verve in the presentment of the former, but they would far more suitably stand for the chivalry of Spain than for the prosaic citizen soldiers of the Netherlands. Within the fortress there is a lion with his paw on a sheaf of arrows, a device taken from the arms of the United Provinces. Considering the great merit of Rembrandt's drawings of lions, on which see postea, p. 120, the beast is here delineated with a shocking want of success. Other portions of the field contain allegories not easy to read. Rembrandt was of course unpractised in the conventions of this class of work, and did not, like Rubens, possess ready to his hand the apparatus of recognized personifications and emblems by means of which such pieces can be built up. Nor was the decorative sense so strongly developed in the Dutch master as it was in his great Flemish contemporary, who with light and colour and swing of line could carry off the absurdities in which his invention, brilliant though superficial, was so prolific. Had Rembrandt been commissioned to carry out the picture it would not have ranked among his successes. There are also two allegorical etchings, but they are not of importance in the master's work.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARLY LIFE AND FORTUNES OF REMBRANDT, 1606–1642

Leyden in 1606: Rembrandt's home and family. Portrait-studies of his relatives, and of himself.

Rembrandt's early years: his schooling: did he study at the University? His knowledge of the Bible. Rembrandt's first teachers. His early studies as described by Constantin Huygens. Rembrandt's settlement in Amsterdam. His marriage with Saskia van Uylenburch. His worldly prosperity: his pupils. The house in the Breestraat and the artistic treasures it contained. Rembrandt as collector. Illness and death of Saskia: the terms of her will.

Rembrandt was the scion of a well-to-do burgher family, in one of the pleasantest and most prosperous towns of Holland. The English traveller, Montague, wrote of it in 1696 'Leyden is said, by some, to be the Eye, by others, the Garden of *Holland*,'[1] and the burgomaster of Leyden, Orlers, in his description of the city, first published in 1614, writes with patriotic enthusiasm about its beauty and its gaiety, the amenity of its well-ordered streets and waterways, its crowded business quarters, the academic dignity of its University. He boasts of its size and population, and its convenient site in the midst of a richly cultivated champaign dotted with flourishing

1 *The Delights of Holland*, Lond. 1696.

villages. In the first decade of the seventeenth century the city must have been as good a place to be born into as Europe could show.

Leyden was strongly fortified, and the validity of the civic defences was recognized by the Spaniards, who in the famous siege of 1574 contented themselves with a blockade. The Rhine in various channels washed the towers and curtain wall of the enceinte, and the various gates were approached by removable wooden bridges thrown across the streams. The principal thoroughfare, the Breestraat, or Broad Street, in the middle of which rose the handsome Town Hall of the sixteenth century, intersected the city from east to west, and at its north-western extremity on the side towards the sea, here called Noordeinde, it issued from the municipal bounds through the so-called Witte Poort or White Gate, a strong work with round towers at its corners, and protected by an external redout. Vosmaer calls this a 'joli monument de l'architecture civile du 17^{me} siècle,' and acquaints us with the amazing fact that between the dates of the first and second editions of his book[1] it was demolished Had the Dutch State Commission, appointed in 1903 to protect historical monuments of the kind, been in existence a generation ago, we may be sure that this act of destruction would have been avoided, for the White Gate looked down upon the birthplace of Leyden's greatest citizen. Under its shadow the future painter of the 'Sortie' took his first steps, and it formed the most prominent feature in the city view that was his first impression of the outside world.

[1] *Rembrandt, sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, La Haye, 1868 and 1877.

The natural features of the locality have now been considerably altered. In the seventeenth century any one passing in from the west through the White Gate and turning to the left along the line of the curtain wall, would find himself in a narrow street called the Weddesteeg, or street of the watering-place. The Weddesteeg ran northward from the gate, having on its left the raised terrace or rampart against the wall called by the name 'Pelican rampart,' and on its right a row of houses with gardens in the rear. At the end of this row the wall turned abruptly to the east, by the 'Pelican' tower that gave its name to this stretch of rampart, and near the corner on the raised rampart stood a mill, while a second mill occupied a site close to, and to the north of, the White Gate. Both these mills and more than one of the houses in the row just mentioned are associated with the family of Rembrandt.

In the Town Museum of Leyden there is preserved a plan or bird's-eye view of the city, dated 1578, and pronounced by Dr. Pleyte, the Conservator of the Museum of Antiquities, to be a very careful production.[1] On Plate 8 is reproduced a copy of a portion of this map, and it shows the aspect of the locality in the time of Rembrandt's immediate ancestors. At a date soon after the siege of 1574 his grandmother was living in one of the houses of the Weddesteeg with her second husband and the children of her first marriage, of whom one, Harmen, by occupation a miller, became the painter's father. In 1589 Harmen married Neeltjen (Cornelia), daughter of Willem van Suydtbrouck,

1 It is published in photo-lithography in Dr. Pleyte's *Leiden voor 300 Jaren en Tans*, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1874.

and purchased from his stepfather and his mother a half share in a certain mill and one of the houses facing the Weddesteeg. Various family transactions intervened, but ultimately Harmen remained in possession of this house, the third from the corner where the Pelican bastion is marked on the plan, and this house was the birthplace of Rembrandt.[1] The Weddesteeg still remains and keeps its ancient name, and the site of Rembrandt's birthplace, now occupied by a carriage store, is marked by an inscribed tablet. The lane runs northward to the quay where was formerly the Pelican rampart, but on the west, instead of immediately facing the river, it has now in front of it a barrack and a naval school, that have been built on ground won by diverting westwards the course of the stream in the neighbourhood of the gate.

A mill mentioned above is called 'Rembrandt's mill,' and is associated in legend with his art, as he is reported on indifferent authority to have derived his special effects of chiaroscuro from early studies made in the sombre interior of the mill, where he is supposed to have set up his easel. The particular mill in question is the one close to the White Gate, not the one near the corner of the rampart to the north. The former is the true 'Rembrandt's mill,' and the following is its history. It had been bought by the painter's grandmother and transported from the village of Noordwijk, between Leyden and the sea, to the site where our plan shows it, beside the White Gate. This was in 1575. In 1589 Harmen bought a half share of it, the other half remaining the property of his stepfather, so that it could be regarded as a family possession.

1 The locality is indicated by a cross on the plan on Plate 8.

PLATE 8.—PART OF PLAN OF LEYDEN, OF 1578

To face p. 46

Rembrandt's mother, who survived Harmen for ten years, held a share at her death in 1640, and this passed to Rembrandt's eldest brother, Adriaen, whose face we meet with on some of the painter's later canvases. In 1646 Adriaen acquired the whole of the mill, which he forthwith transported to a new site to the south of the White Gate. These proceedings are attested both by official documents, given by Vosmaer, and also by successive plans of the city at the periods in question. One of these documents, reproduced in facsimile in *Leiden voor 300 Jaren*, gives sketches of several windmills of the time of Rembrandt's father. They are all of wood, turning on pivots on a base that seems also of wood, and were evidently transportable. 'Rembrandt's mill' remained for some time on the site to which his brother removed it, though it had been rebuilt of stone, but it has now disappeared. Originally it was known by the family name 'van Rijn' but in the eighteenth century this appellation was dropped. The place of the mill in Rembrandt legend, if not history, makes it worth while bestowing this attention on it, and a word may be added on attempts to identify this mill with one or other of those which we meet with in the master's pictures or etchings. It is certainly not the large but clumsy and obviously not movable mill that forms the chief feature in the fine etching B. 233, but it has been an open question whether we can recognize it in the mill on the lofty dyke in Lord Lansdowne's famous landscape at Bowood. Now in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem there is a drawing catalogued as of 'the school of Rembrandt,' which gives a view of this same mill on a rampart, with behind it a church tower that certainly does not

belong to Leyden. Hence the mill in the Bowood picture is probably not the Leyden mill at all. It is obvious that if we reject the legend that Rembrandt used the mill as a painting room we have no reason to suppose him specially interested in it.

Rembrandt's father and his connections belonged to the moderately well-to-do burgher class, the pith and marrow of the population. Harmen, who had twice filled the post of ward-master of his quarter, had nine children, of whom Rembrandt was the eighth. The eldest, Adriaen, was like his father a miller, and some of the other sons had trades. There was only one daughter, called Lijsbeth, after the mother of Harmen, and she was the youngest of the family.

The face and form of Lijsbeth, as well as those of Adriaen and his wife, and of the mother and father of the family, have been recognized in Rembrandt's pictures and etchings. It is true that recognitions of this kind are in the case of Rembrandt rather hazardous, for he was not always particular in keeping to likeness. A very large number of his works that would conventionally be termed 'portraits' are really pictorial studies in which the particular head or figure before him has been used as a vehicle of artistic effect. It was often made up pictorially by aid of rich and at times fantastic attire and trappings. The *ensemble* was then treated as an artistic whole, in which the actual lineaments of the model, the colour of hair, etc., were treated as in themselves indifferent. Rembrandt's most common model for these studies was himself, but he dressed up too the other members of the family circle and made them sit to him, for studies or subject-pictures.

Adriaen is the original of a fine study that Bode has published in *Oud Holland*, vol. IX, 1891, and we recognize his rugged and melancholy features in the 'Man with the Gold Helmet' in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum at Berlin, and in portraits at the Hermitage (No. 824) and at Stockholm (No. 581). Lijsbeth has comparatively recently been identified, though not always with certainty, as the subject of several pictures in Rembrandt's early manner, that the older critics took to be portraits of his wife Saskia. In the Liechtenstein gallery at Vienna there are two examples. One shows the face in full light delicately rendered in clear and silvery tones with that bluey tinge common in early Rembrandts. The other presents the same girl under the hands of an attendant who is arranging for her an elaborate toilette. In the case of another 'Lijsbeth' in the museum at Stockholm there is more doubt whether the original is her or Saskia; but on the other hand the head in Sir Francis Cook's collection at Richmond, of 1632, has a likeness to that of Rembrandt himself which seems convincing. The sister moreover served as model for some early subject-pictures for which Saskia could not have sat.[1] This is the case with the 'Delilah' of the early 'Samson and Delilah' in the Museum at Berlin, of 1628, the 'Proserpina' of the Berlin Museum, the companion picture to which is dated 1632, and the Mary of the 'Presentation' at the Hague, of 1631. It has been conjectured, though there is no evidence for this besides the pictures, that at one time she was keeping

1 Saskia was not betrothed to the artist till the middle of 1633 and it is impossible that before this date she can have posed in 'action' in his studio.

house for her brother, when there would have been opportunities for these studies. It must be admitted that in the matter of physiognomy there seems little difference between the Lijsbeth pictures and those known to be from Saskia, but on the whole Lijsbeth's face is plumper and more babyish, Saskia's has the features more strongly marked. The criterion of date is the best one for separating the two sets.

The father of Rembrandt has also in comparatively recent times been disengaged from the various old men who figure so largely in the work of the artist. He died in 1630, so that all the representations of him in paint and black-and-white are early works. We meet him in the Museum at Amsterdam [1] wearing the same steel gorget in which the youthful artist painted himself in the Hague portrait given on Plate 10, the only difference being that, as the self-portrait is reversed, the fastening of the gorget comes on the other shoulder. The face of Harmen is that of an anxious-looking man of narrow mental range. He has a long nose and slight moustache and beard, and is almost bald-headed. Some of the best renderings of the head are at the Hermitage, No. 814; at Cassel, from the Habich collection, No. 230, and at the Hague, No. 565, while there are other examples in the Liechtenstein Gallery and in private collections. Among the etchings B. 263 gives an excellent version of Harmen. He seems also to have sat for the figure of the 'Money Changer' at Berlin, of 1627, one of the two earliest dated pictures by the

1 This is recognized now as an old copy from the original in the possession of Mr. W. Chamberlain at Brighton.

a

b

PLATE 9.—*a*. REMBRANDT'S MOTHER. ETCHING. *B.* 351

b. DRAWING OF BABY IN CRADLE

Heseltine Collection

To face p. 50

artist, and for the 'Repentant Judas,' a picture that will be noticed in the sequel.

Rembrandt's portraits of his mother are of greater importance. Plate 9 a. gives one of the best known and most effective of these. It is one of two of Rembrandt's etchings which bear the earliest date. (See postea, p. 159.) She survived her husband for ten years, and Rembrandt painted her in the maturity of his powers. Her physiognomy is a striking one, and betokens a strong character with considerable intellectual capacity. She is easily to be distinguished from the numerous old ladies that occupy canvases belonging to the early and later periods of the artist, such as the popular 'Old Lady with the Ruff' of the London National Gallery, and the old women of the later epoch, of one of whom there are three versions in the Hermitage alone. Dr. Bredius has lent to the Hague collection a very pleasing small head of Rembrandt's mother, wearing a peculiar form of hood, that is more clearly made out in the important study in the gallery at Oldenburg, where the old lady, who is here called the prophetess Anna, is shown reading out of a huge folio. She wears a wonderful violet cloak and a hood of the same colour brocaded with gold and trimmed with rich gold braid. Perhaps the most effective of the numerous pictures and etchings in which Rembrandt expressed his filial devotion is the painting in the Vienna Museum dated 1639, the year before the lady's death. There is here a certain aristocratic stateliness in the bearing, and decision of character in the lineaments. The aquiline nose is finely cut. One would surmise that Neeltjen Willemsdr. van Suydtbrouck, as she

was named, had come from a somewhat higher social station than her more plebeian-looking husband, and the son of such a mother might well inherit from her a character gentle and refined as well as vigorous.

Such an impression we derive from the characteristic self-portrait at the Hague, painted by Rembrandt about 1629. The face (see Plate 10) is that of an alert, resolute youth, with a look of sprightliness about the mouth that lightens up features of a plebeian cast, which one could well imagine growing coarser with advancing years. The nose is the most characteristic trait. It is heavy, almost bulbous, at the tip, where it is divided by a distinct vertical depression, marked in the Hague portrait, as in almost all its numerous successors. He wears a thick shock of curly hair of a dark brown hue, and the lace collar and steel gorget are intended to give a dapper military air to the comely lad.

Of Rembrandt's actual relations with his family we hear something on occasions when family conclaves were held for the adjustment of inheritances, and the like. He seems always to have acted in these matters with good feeling and generosity. There is however a specially sympathetic quality about his pictures and etchings of his mother which tempts us to surmise that a close relation of affection and filial regard existed between the two. It is very significant in this regard to note that though all the other members of the family, from the father downwards, and later on his wife Saskia, had to dress up and pose to suit his fancy, his mother is always treated quite quietly and in ordinary dress, though, as at Oldenburg, one of special richness is sometimes

PLATE 10.—THE YOUTHFUL REMBRANDT. SELF-PORTRAIT
The Hague

To face p. 52

assumed. An instinctive reverence makes itself felt in this reserve.

A certain solidarity of family feeling amongst all the van Rijn connections may perhaps be argued from the fact that the baptismal names of the members of the clan are passed on from one generation to another, every child apparently being called after a relative.

Rembrandt first saw the light on the 15th day of July in a year that has been accepted on the authority of Orlers as 1606, though there is no official attestation of the date. His name, which occurs occasionally in records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was that of the father of a lady who married Harmen's step-father after his mother's death, and as she lived next door to Harmen she may have acted as godmother to the child, and have given him her own father's name. The first account we possess of the future painter is written by a contemporary, Orlers, author of an elaborate *Description of Leyden*, of which town he had been burgomaster. In the second edition of his work, which appeared first in 1614 and then in 1641, Orlers offers an account of Rembrandt that is of so much value and interest that it is given here in full in a translation. The significance of some of Orlers's remarks we shall see as we proceed.

'Rembrandt van Rijn,

Son of Harmen Gerritszoon van Rijn and of Neeltgen Willems van Suydtbrouck, was born in Leyden city on July 15 in the year 1606. His parents put him to school with the view of his learning later on the Latin tongue and of entering him at the Academy (University) of Leyden,

in order that when he had come to his years he might be of service through his learning to the city and the community at large, but for this he showed no desire nor inclination seeing that his natural tendencies were all in the direction of the art of painting and of design; wherefore they felt themselves compelled to take their son from the school and in accordance with his desires to place him with a painter that he might learn from the latter the first principles and beginnings of this art. According to this resolve they brought him to the reputable painter Master Jacob Isaacksz van Swanenburch, to receive instruction from him, with whom he stayed about three years, and during this time he advanced so far that the connoisseurs in art greatly wondered thereat, while all men could see that in time he would become a most excellent painter. Accordingly his father found it good to bring him and place him with the famous painter P. Lasman, who dwelt in Amsterdam, in order that by him he might be further and better instructed and trained. With him he remained about six months, and after that he thought it good to open up and to practise the painter's art alone and on his own resources, and in this he has so well succeeded that he has become one of the most renowned painters of our age. As his art and his manner of work greatly pleased the inhabitants of Amsterdam, and as he was often urged to execute portraits and other works in that city, he found it good to transport himself from Leyden to Amsterdam, and accordingly he departed from here about the year 1630, and took up his abode yonder, where he still resides in this year 1641.'[1]

[1] J. Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden*, Leyden, 1641, p. 375.

The reason why Rembrandt was selected by his parents for a learned career is not apparent. The lad may have shown signs of scholarly capacity, or it may merely have been the case that his parents desired one at any rate of their children to share in the intellectual life of the recently founded University, the fame of which was already reflecting credit on the town. A record has come to light which shows that Rembrandt's name was actually entered in the *Album Studiosorum* of the University. The record runs: '20 *Mai* 1620 *Rembrandus Hermanni Leydensis an.* 14 *stud. litt. apud Parentes*'[1]—'May 20, 1620, Rembrandt, son of Harmen of Leyden, aged 14, in the faculty of Letters, living with his parents'; and it becomes necessary to inquire what this may have implied. Orlers makes it quite clear that according to his information Rembrandt was sent to school with a view to his learning Latin and proceeding in course of time to the University, but that after a while he was withdrawn from the school and sent into an artist's studio. In matters in which the statements of Orlers about Rembrandt and his family can be tested they have been found accurate, and there is nothing in the above account which would lead us to doubt it, though no dates are given. The year 1620 must give us the time when Rembrandt's preliminary schooling was finished and he was ready for the University, and he was then either turned 14 or in his 14th year. Some authorities have believed that Rembrandt actually attended, not the school only, but the University,[2] and was ultimately withdrawn from

1 De Groot, *Urkunden*, No. 11.

2 Dr. J. Six, 'De Homerus van Rembrandt,' in *Oud Holland*, 1897, p. 1.

thence, and not from the preliminary school, when it was decided to make him an artist, but how are we to reconcile academic study in the faculty of Letters at Leyden, where the chair of classical philology was filled by the greatest scholars in Europe, with the statement of Sandrart that Rembrandt 'could read nothing but simple Dutch and so could derive little help from books'?[1] How are we to reconcile it with the general impression we derive of Rembrandt's intellectual attainments? The most that can be said of these has been stated by Dr. J. Six in his article of 1897 on Rembrandt as a scholar,[2] but he does not persuade us that Rembrandt was anything more than an intelligent and thoughtful man who had received a fair education, but not one up to an academic standard.

From all that we know of him we should say that, though not a scholar, Rembrandt possessed an active intelligence that drew in as with daily breath the intellectual atmosphere of his times. His was by no means the case of Turner, who united splendid artistic genius, and spiritual instincts of a noble kind, with a crudity in intellectual discipline almost incredible. Rembrandt, as his existing letters show,[3] could write with ease and express himself with perfect clearness in phrases appropriate to the matter in hand. His signature, with which all lovers of prints and pictures are so familiar, is firm and legible. He was evidently too on easy terms with the principal

1 *Urkunden*, p. 393.

2 Ante, p. 55, note 2. Dr. Six goes so far as to suggest that though Rembrandt was no Latinist he may have neglected the language of Cicero in order to study Greek and Hebrew!

3 Several of these have now been published in facsimile in the *Urkunden*.

classical worthies whose names and adventures he treats as familiar things. In his own house, as part of the artistic collection of which more will have to be said, there were antique figures and casts and statues of Roman emperors, with busts of Socrates, Homer, and Aristotle. Among the fancy heads that he was fond of painting and etching there exist or are mentioned studies of Homer, of Zeno, of Lucian, with Bellona and more than one Pallas Athene, while he designed subject pictures from the stories of Diana, Callisto, and Actaeon, of Philemon and Baucis, Pyramus and Thisbe, Medea and Jason, and of the Rapes of Proserpina, Europa, and Ganymede. There is, of course, here no more of classical lore than would be expected from any intelligent citizen of Leyden or Amsterdam, at a time when, as we have seen, literature was full of classical allusions. It should be noted that Karel van Mander had published in 1604 a translation of the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, as a part of his *Schilderboek*, so that artists had not far to go for an abundant supply of the graceful nudities of the age of Saturn.

Rembrandt possessed a very small library, and only '15 boecken in verscheijde formaeten' are catalogued in the inventory of 1656, without indication of their titles. Besides these fifteen miscellaneous volumes there is entered 'een oude bijbel.' This was at any rate one book in which he was deeply read. Rembrandt's knowledge and use of the Bible stand on a different footing from his other intellectual attainments. The former may partly of course be explained by the theological atmosphere of Protestant Holland, which in this respect resembled the Scotland of our forebears. It was not however only as a

citizen of Holland that Rembrandt was familiar with the Scriptures. We may suspect here family influence from the side of his mother. In the Hermitage at St. Petersburg is a picture, No. 822, of a child reading out of what seems to be the Bible to an old lady, who holds her glasses in her hand. In this intimately treated piece there may well be some reminiscence of his own childhood, when he lisped the verses at his mother's knee, in the house on the Weddesteeg at Leyden. The gallery at Bridgewater House contains a gem of Rembrandt's work in the form of a little picture on the same theme called 'Hannah teaching the youthful Samuel,' that was studied from his own child Titus at the knee of his nurse, and this may be taken to show that the good old tradition was maintained in the household of the artist. Early training and the custom of his race and time may thus have disposed Rembrandt to biblical study, but the insight, the sympathy, the deep comprehension, of which his scriptural pieces are evidence, were Rembrandt's own, and belong to that part of his nature which bears the stamp of natural greatness. No schooling taught Rembrandt how Christ must have looked to the disciples to whom He was known in the breaking of bread, nor how in the reception of the Prodigal the human fatherhood might visibly prefigure the divine.

To return now to the main facts of Rembrandt's outward life, we may assume that it was about 1620 when he entered the studio of his first teacher. He would then be fourteen years of age. This teacher, van Swanenburch, was a very indifferent painter, and the choice of him, as Vosmaer suggested, was no doubt due to a family connection which existed between his kin and the van Rijns.

He was however a man of social distinction, which had its advantages, and may have been a better teacher than painter. Lastman was an artist of far greater repute, but it says something for van Swanenburch that after the three years Rembrandt seemed to feel that he had already enough instruction for a start, and need make no long stay with the more advanced teacher.

After leaving Lastman, Rembrandt returned to Leyden, and we hear nothing of any 'Wanderjahre.' He now settled down with a companion of the same age and artistic predilections to a period of intense and continuous personal study, during which he laid the foundations of his after greatness. We have lately come into the possession of some interesting notices of Rembrandt's manner of life and work at this critical epoch of his development.

These are contained in some autobiographical memoranda in Latin discovered among the papers of the famous scholar and man of affairs Constantin Huygens, and first given to the world by Dr. J. A. Worp, who printed extracts in *Oud Holland* for 1891, and the complete text in 1897.[1] The notes were written by Huygens between 1629 and 1631, and the passages which are concerned with painters and painting are of special value because he was personally interested in the art, which he tells us his father desired him to learn, for the sake of acquiring a sound judgment on its principles and practice. After mentioning many Netherland artists from Lucas van Leyden downwards, and bestowing on Michael van Miereveld, who had painted his portrait, a somewhat extravagant eulogy,

1 In *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap*, XVIII Deel, Utrecht, 1897.

Huygens goes on to speak of a certain 'noble pair of youths of Leyden,' of whose coming greatness he discourses with something like awe. The wonder is that such promise should be shown by youths of humble birth,[1] for one was the son of an embroiderer, the other of a miller! Their artistic parentage was equally lowly for their teachers were insignificant, and 'nihil praeceptoribus debent, ingenio omnia.'

The name of the one is Joannes Livius (Jan Lievenszoon), that of the other, the miller's son, Rembrandt. Both are beardless, and as well in build as in countenance more like children than youths. 'It is not in my power,' he writes, 'nor is this the place to give a minute account of their achievements or manner of work. . . . This much however I will venture to say of each. Rembrandt surpasses Lievens in taste and in quick sensibility, but is inferior to him in sublimity of invention and a certain audacity in ideas and forms. For the youthful soul of Lievens breathes nothing that is not great and noble, and rather exaggerates the grandeur of the forms he has before his eyes than merely equals it, while the other (Rembrandt), wrapping himself in his work, prefers to concentrate on a small picture, and give in little an effect that on the vastest canvases of others you would seek for in vain.'[2] . . .

1 Ab his aratris monstra duo ingeniorum et sollertiae prodire, quis non obstupescat?

2 Ego de singulis sic perfunctorie pronunciare audebo, Rembrantium judicio et affectuum vivacitate Livio praestare, hunc alteri inventionis et quâdam audacium argumentorum formarumque superbiâ. Nam et animo juvenili nihil hic nisi grande et magnificum spirans, objectarum formarum magnitudinem non tam adaequat libenter, quam exsuperat; ille, suae se industriae involvens, in minorem tabulam conferre amat et compendio effectum dare, quod in amplissimis aliorum frustra quaeras.

There follows here an interesting criticism on an early picture by Rembrandt, that will be quoted more suitably on a later page, and then a passage of eulogy on Lievens, whose only fault seemed to be that he was too unbending in the face of (Huygens's) criticism. In one quality Huygens confesses his inferiority to Rembrandt. 'In historical pictures, as we call them, though Lievens is a consummate and admirable master, yet he will not easily equal the lively invention of his friend.'

The end of Huygens's note on the 'par nobile adolescentium' contains some interesting matter:

'These noble youths, from whom I find it hard to tear myself, have only one fault, that, as I have noted in the case of Lievens, they are so calmly satisfied that they hold Italy in small account, though they could visit it in a few months. This is, forsooth, like a vein of madness in tempers so noble, that while they are young they neglect to acquire what alone is wanting to the perfection of their art. Oh, if only they were familiar, as I should wish, with the Raphaels and the Michelangelos, and could feast their eyes on the works of these great spirits, how soon would these youths, born, if only they knew it, for the perfecting of Art, be able to surpass all that there they found and even bring the Italians to Holland! But I must not omit to mention the excuse in which they fold themselves and explain their inactivity, for they say that while in the flower of their years, of which they must make the most, they have not the time to spend in travel; and furthermore that nowadays such is the love of the kings and princes of the North for paintings and so careful their choice, that the finest

Italian pictures are here to be seen, and that they are brought together here into collections whereas in Italy they are scattered far apart. To what extent this plea is justified I will not spend time in inquiring. I am however bound to testify that in the case of no kind of people, in no undertaking whatsoever, at no time of life, saw I such zeal and such devotion. Whilst they verily "redeem the time," they have but one aim, their work, and that this wonderful work may not be found wanting in anything, even the innocent pleasures of youth have but slight attractions for them, because these involve a loss of time. It is as if one were looking at old men, full of years, whose enjoyment of all such childish things belongs to the former times. Often have I wished that these excellent young men might relax a little in this untiring persistence in hard work, and give heed to their delicate bodies, which through their sedentary life are already somewhat lacking in health and vigour.'

Two contemporary authorities have now given us a clear account of the early stages of Rembrandt's life-course. We see the child destined by his parents for a learned career, the mind of the boy inclining more and more in the direction of art, the stripling taking the decisive step and turning his back on the Academy he had formally entered, the youth learning from indifferent masters the rudiments of his profession, the rising independence of incipient manhood lending him strength to stand alone. Constantin Huygens has given us the impression made by his indomitable zeal on one of the most cultured and thoughtful spirits of the age, and Orlers has told us how the artistic public of the time was already

recognizing the result of the concentrated study, the unaided personal striving, that the former watched so sympathetically. It is a justification of what Orlers has said that, as he tells us in another place, Gerard Dou, then a boy of 15, entered Rembrandt's studio as a pupil at the beginning of 1628, and remained with him for three years.

Orlers has told us that Rembrandt was attracted to Amsterdam owing to the commissions he received from patrons in that city. Some of these he may have carried out while still domiciled with his parents in his native city, and the transfer of his headquarters from the Rhine to the Amstel may thus have been a gradual one. At any rate he was still a resident in Leyden in 1631,[1] so that all the work that can be placed before that time belongs to the Leyden period, though a portion of it may have been actually executed in Amsterdam.

The Amsterdam period can be reckoned as beginning with the definite date 1632, the year of the 'Lesson on Anatomy,' and it is quite possible that it was this commission which decided him to take up there his permanent residence.

Rembrandt's quarters in Amsterdam, at least in the middle of 1632, and apparently for some time afterwards, were at the house of a certain Hendrick van Uylenburch,[2] an artist and dealer in works of art, with whom he had business transactions implying some personal intimacy.[3] This personage was connected with the family of one

1 *Oud Holland*, v, 213. *Urkunden*, No. 19.

2 *Oud Holland*, xvii, 1.

3 In 1631 Rembrandt lent Uylenburch 1000 florins. *Oud Holland*, v. 213.

Rombertus van Uylenburch, a Frisian lawyer of family and fortune, who had played a patriotic part at the outbreak of hostilities with Spain, and was present with William of Orange, on a mission from the cities of Friesland, on the fatal evening of the Prince's assassination. Rombertus had a large family and his youngest daughter, Saskia, became the wife of Rembrandt. Saskia, who was born in July 1612, lost her mother in 1619 and her father, Rombertus, in 1624, and seems to have resided with one or other of her sisters, one of whom had married an artist, while others were mated with husbands of good position. A first cousin of hers moreover was the wife of the well-known preacher, Jan Sylvius, of Amsterdam. Rembrandt may have become acquainted with Saskia through her artist brother-in-law, through her relative the art-dealer, or through her cousin by marriage, Jan Sylvius, whom Rembrandt knew, and whose portrait he drew in 1633. At any rate the acquaintance, however formed, soon ripened into love, and the form and face of the youthful Frisian lady became all at once familiar themes of his art. The great Rembrandt collections at the Hermitage, at Cassel, and at Dresden, count Saskia portraits among their masterpieces, and in the etched work she is also of some importance, while she lent him her face and form as model in many of his subject-pictures, as, for example, for the bride in 'Samson's Wedding Feast,' at Dresden, and for the 'Susannah' of the Hague.

The most charming version of Saskia that Rembrandt has given to us is a delicate silver-point drawing in the Print Room at Berlin. She appears here a sufficiently comely maid whose features, partly shaded by her broad-brimmed

hat, are a little marred by a small and rather prim mouth. In her hand is a flower. There is an inscription in Rembrandt's writing below the sketch that was clearly written at the same time. It runs as follows: 'dit is naer myn huysvrou geconterfeyt do sy 21 jaer oud was den derden dach als wy getroudt waeren, den 8 Junyus 1633.'[1] As is well known the register of the actual marriage of the youthful couple gives a different date, and tells us 'Anno 1634 den 22 Junij sijn in 't houwelijck bevestigd Rembrant Hermens van Rhijn, tot Amsterdam woonachtigh, ende Saskia van Ulenborgh, nu tot Franeker woonachtigh,'[2] so that the word 'getroudt' is used in the sense of 'betrothed' not 'married.' In the famous profile portrait at Cassel in the broad-brimmed hat, perhaps the most carefully finished of all the master's works, Saskia holds a spray of rosemary which in the Dutch language of flowers betokened betrothal. A year's betrothal before the marriage may accordingly be held established, and during this year Saskia may have sat to the artist more freely. Indeed she seems to have taken on herself early the burden of her new duties, for a picture of Saskia in full armour as the goddess Bellona is signalized by Bode in his last volume of the *Complete Work* as bearing the date 1633.

For Rembrandt this would be an extremely busy year, full of work and full of hope, with the horizon bright before him and some of fortune's good gifts already in his hand. Commissions, as Orlers has told us, brought him to

1 'This is taken from my bride when she was 21 years old, the third day after we were betrothed, the 8th of June 1633.'

2 *Urkunden*, No. 37. 'In the year 1634, on June 22 were joined in marriage Rembrant Hermansz van Rhijn, living at Amsterdam, and Saskia van Ulenborgh, at present living at Franeker.'

Amsterdam, and his practice was at once lucrative. Bode has estimated that in the years 1632 to 1634 he painted at least fifty portraits, many of them commissioned by persons of distinction in the city, and he ascribes twenty at least to the year of the 'Lesson on Anatomy' alone.[1] Constantin Huygens introduced him to the notice of the Stadhouder Prince Frederick Henry, for whom the artist painted a series of 'Passion' pictures, of a kind traditional in the northern schools, that are now in the Pinakothek at Munich. For these pictures, or at any rate for two of them, Rembrandt asked 1000 florins each, and actually received 600 florins each, besides expenses. This was in 1639, and as the pictures measure only about three feet by two the price is a very high one.[2] Notices and accounts show us that about 1637 his portraits were sometimes paid at the rate of 500 florins each,[3] while 'Corporation' pieces brought in about 100 florins for each figure in the group. Prints, in which Rembrandt's output was large, were valued according to their 'states' in quite a modern fashion, and the name '100 Florin Plate' for the famous etching of 'Christ Healing the Sick' show us that prices here too might rise tolerably high. Saskia brought him a fortune of at least 20,000 florins,[4] so that money was readily forthcoming to furnish forth a home, while Rembrandt had already acquired the nucleus of a collection of objects of art that would give that home an air of taste and sumptuousness.

1 *Complete Work*, II, 1.

2 The correspondence regarding these pictures is printed by Scheltema, *Rembrand*, Amsterdam, 1853, p. 124 f., and more recently in *Urkunden*, with facsimiles.

3 *Oud Holland*, III, 93. See also postea, p. 101.

4 See postea, p. 91.

Rembrandt's house, that was his headquarters during the central part of his artistic life, still exists in the Joden Breestraat at Amsterdam, No. 4, and in the year of writing, 1906, the three-hundredth anniversary of the artist's birth, it has been purchased for the purpose of being dedicated in perpetuity to the public as a Rembrandt Museum. Here the painter not only lived and laboured and enjoyed his collection of works of art and of curiosity, but also directed the efforts of his numerous pupils, who are said by Sandrart to have paid him fees of 100 florins a year each, while the pictures and plates they executed after his designs were a source of profit to him to the amount of 2,000 or 2,500 florins annually.[1] For these he fitted up the attic story of the house with a series of compartments in each of which a student would have been found at work. Houbraken tells a story apropos of this arrangement which shows Rembrandt particular about the morals of the establishment.

This house the artist purchased, not immediately on his marriage, but in 1639, for the price of 13,000 florins to be paid in instalments. After a few payments had been made, Rembrandt's affairs fell into disorder, and gave

1 On the back of one of Rembrandt's drawings in the Berlin Cabinet (*Urkunden*, No. 39) there are some notes in his handwriting relating to the sales of copies of his pictures by the hands of some of his pupils, and in each case a sum of money is mentioned. The sums however are small, and they may only represent the percentage of the price of the works which the master would retain while the actual executant took the rest. There is a copy of the 'Sacrifice of Isaac' of the Hermitage in the Pinakothek at Munich, and on it is inscribed 'Rembrandt verandert en overgeschildert 1636,' 'altered and painted over by Rembrandt 1636.' The original is dated 1635, and the copy might be by Bol or Flinck. (*Urkunden*, No. 46.)

occasion for legal proceedings upon which more will presently be said. The purchase of so expensive a dwelling is of course proof how flourishing Rembrandt's affairs seemed to be during the earlier years of his married life, when Bode estimates that he would be making some £5000 to £6000 a year of our money.[1] Indeed in a legal document of 1638 he declares that he and his wife were richly and even superabundantly endowed with worldly goods.[2] At the same time it was in fact to a great extent the cause of his financial ruin, for the failure to pay the balance of the purchase price led through a series of unfortunate transactions to his bankruptcy in 1656.

We can form some idea of the interior fittings of the house in the Breestraat from the inventory of Rembrandt's possessions made on the occasion of his bankruptcy in 1656. The inventory has often been published, and is given, with notes, as No. 169 of the *Urkunden* of 1906. Not much is said about furniture, with the exception of sundry chairs, tables with their covers, presses, and beds, and most of the items of the inventory are either works of art in the form of pictures and prints, casts, and drawings, or else 'raritijten,' comprising oriental and western arms, musical instruments, furs, corals, shells, porcelain, glass, and other so-called 'objects of virtù.' The casts were largely from the antique; the Laocoon and numerous Roman emperors and empresses are mentioned, while there was

1 *Complete Work*, VIII. 6. According to his calculation this sum is the equivalent of 12 to 15 thousand gulden of the currency of Rembrandt's day.

2 'Ofschoon hy Impetrant (Rembrandt) ende sijn huysvrouwe voorsz. rijckelijck ende *ex superabundante* sijn begoediget'—Scheltema, l.c., p. 55.

also a cast from Michelangelo. Among the pictures were one or two Italian pieces, but in the large collection of prints we find mentioned almost all the works of Titian, a valuable book of Mantegna engravings, and prints from Raphael, Michelangelo, the Carracci, etc., as well as from Rubens and Vandyke, from Lucas van Leyden, and from many other artists of the northern schools. Of northern artists whose pictures adorned the walls it is interesting to note the prominence of Brouwer, in whose handling of oil pigment and whose colour Rembrandt was bound to take delight. Eight landscapes by Hercules Seghers give us some idea of the source from which Rembrandt may have drawn those wilder landscape motives which occur in his pictures, but which can never have fallen under his own eye. Rembrandt's own pictures, etchings, and drawings were naturally also in evidence.

As regards the bric-a-brac, a good deal of this was artistic stock-in-trade, and we can recognize in the extant pictures certain objects of the inventory, such as the 'isere Ringhkraegh' (iron collar) which Rembrandt wears at the Hague (Plate 10), and which does duty in so many of his studies. Baldinucci, in his notice of Rembrandt,[1] derived largely from a pupil, Bernard Keihl, who was with the Amsterdam master in the fifties, gives us the following useful information. 'He was constantly visiting the places of public auctions, and there procured him ancient and cast-off costumes, which seemed to him quaint and picturesque, and all these things, though they were often full of dirt, he would hang up on the walls of

[1] *Cominciamento e Progresso dell' Arte dell' Intagliare in Rame*, etc., Firenze, 1686, p. 78 f., and *Urkunden*, No. 360.

his studio side by side with all the fine and showy objects (le belle galanterie), in which he took so much delight, that is to say, every kind of arm ancient and modern, such as darts, halbards, swords, daggers, and the like; together with an endless quantity of drawings, prints, medals, and everything else that he thought could ever be useful to a painter."[1]

Baldinucci also tells us how these treasures were secured. When he saw put up for sale any thing appertaining to his art, especially pictures or drawings by great men of any school, he bid so high at the outset that no further bidder came forward, and he would say that he did this to exalt the honour of his art. There are many records of sales in which Rembrandt's name appears, but we cannot of course estimate how far in each case he obtained value for the money laid out. On one occasion, in 1637, he, or rather a pupil on his account, gave 637 gulden for a book of prints by Lucas van Leyden,[2] while Sandrart was told that Rembrandt once paid at a public auction 1400 gulden for 14 fine prints of this same artist.[3] At this rate the house in the Breestraat would soon become a veritable museum of works of art, and the surroundings of the artist would wear an appearance of well-being if not of luxury.

One of the most brilliant, though not most interesting, of Rembrandt's masterpieces, the self-portrait with Saskia on his knee at Dresden, gives us a glimpse at the interior of the newly wedded pair, and is on the artist's part a

1 *Urkunden*, p. 422.

2 *Urkunden*, Nos. 51, 319. This very book is probably now in the British Museum.

3 Ibid. No. 326.

curious piece of naive self-revelation, that shows the simplicity of his nature, and at the same time the limitations of his social culture.

Rembrandt is seated at table and has taken his young wife on to his knee. The table is covered with a dark figured cloth and bears conspicuously in the middle of it a peacock pasty. He holds aloft in his right hand a tall glass filled with sparkling wine and turns to the spectator with a jovial laugh on his broad and homely countenance. Saskia is seated comfortably on his knee and turns her head also towards the front with a slight good-humoured smile at the *empressement* of her spouse, but with an air at the same time of ladylike reserve. She is quite pretty, with her rounded face and her brown eyes that smile at us in accord with her lips. Wavy brown hair shades her forehead. (See Plate 11.)

The costumes of the pair are the most significant part of the picture for the present purpose. Saskia is in a pale blue robe with dark velvet bodice, very picturesquely cut and slashed, and wears jewelled chains round neck and head. Rembrandt has donned for the occasion a broad black velvet hat, of his own special pattern, with two curling white ostrich feathers. His coat, with elaborate striped sleeves, is of a darkish red, and he wears by his side a long sword, which with the hat and plumes are hardly required at meal times. A green curtain hangs to the right behind Rembrandt's head, and the background is light. The whole piece laughs with colour and brightness, but keeps a certain refinement in the midst of its jollity. There is delicacy in it as well as freedom and verve, and Saskia's face is graceful and winning.

In contrast to this bravura piece we may notice here the etching, B. 19, which shows us the artist and his wife in more homely guise. It is dated 1636 and is later than the Dresden picture, which is not dated but must represent an early stage of wedded bliss, that Bode puts at 1634 or 5. The etching shows Rembrandt in a broad flat hat seated at a table with a porte-crayon in his hand (the left one). Beyond the table sits Saskia, a buxom matronly-looking figure in a cap. She is simply attired.

Of Saskia's character we hear nothing, and though an American writer, who has pleasantly sketched her life from material furnished in Dr. Eekhoff's *De Vrouw van Rembrand*, speaks of 'her final development into a noble woman,' this, though no doubt a fact, is unattested. We can infer from the terms of her will, though there is nothing exceptional in these, that she loved and trusted her husband, and can judge from her features, which Rembrandt has made so familiar to us, that she was a good-hearted placid woman without any very pronounced personal characteristics. One fact of painful significance seems to show that her physical health was in some way unsound, for three children whom she bore to her husband in the first six years of their married life died almost in infancy, while the fourth, Titus, who grew up to manhood and played an important part in the drama of his father's later life, looks delicate in the portraits we have of him, and died at the age of twenty-seven, in the year before the death of Rembrandt.

These children, though their delicacy must have been a source of constant anxiety to their parents, brought under Rembrandt's notice a phase of human life, for which he

PLATE 11.—REMBRANDT WITH SASKIA ON HIS KNEE

Dresden

To face p. 72

had the ready eye and quick sympathy that never failed him. Quite a large class of his drawings, especially well represented in the cabinet at Stockholm, are called 'nursery studies,' and are evidently the result of the observation by the artist of the manners and customs of small children with their mother and their nurse. These sketches, many of which are of great artistic excellence as well as of biographical interest, will be more suitably noticed in the chapter devoted to the drawings.

After less than eight years of wedded happiness Saskia lay on her death-bed. Some delicate sketches on the copper of a woman reclining on a couch, known as B. 369, together with sundry drawings, show us Saskia as she drooped in illness; on June 5, 1642, she signed her will, and not many days after her body was borne to the tomb in the old church of Amsterdam.

Saskia's testament is a document of capital importance for the outward history of Rembrandt in his later years. Scheltema has printed it in full.[1] The form of it is quite in accordance with the usage of the times. She leaves all her property to her only surviving child Titus [and any other legitimate children she may have], on these terms: that 'Rembrandt van Rhijn her husband, until his re-marriage, or if he do not re-marry till his decease, shall remain in full possession of, and enjoy the usufruct of, all the goods the testatrix may leave, on condition of bringing up honourably the child [or children] according to their condition and fortune, in respect of nourishment, clothing, instruction, and other necessaries, up to their majority or

1 It is translated in the French version of Scheltema's *brochure* edited by Bürger, Paris, 1866, p. 69.

their marriage, at which time the said husband of the testatrix shall dower them or establish them as in his discretion he may think fit.' Failing children and their legitimate descendants, Rembrandt is to inherit the property, 'and can alienate, sell, or deal with it otherwise according to his good will and pleasure.' At the decease or remarriage of Rembrandt, half of all the goods that he was then possessed of were to pass to his natural heirs, and half [under certain conditions] to Hiskia van Uylenburch sister of the testatrix. 'Nevertheless the said Rembrant van Rhijn, husband of the testatrix, shall not be obliged to furnish to any-one-soever any statement or inventory of the said goods, or be bound under any falcidian law[1] or have to give in this respect any caution. From all these obligations the testatrix by these presents specially exempts her said husband, being confident that her said spouse will conscientiously acquit himself of this charge.' Finally the testatrix directs that none of her property is to be declared in any Chamber of Orphans, but that it shall all be governed and administered by the said Rembrandt van Rhijn her spouse, and he is to be the guardian of the heirs [her children] and administrator of their goods to the exclusion of any Chamber of Orphans, in particular that of Amsterdam. Scheltema added a transcript of a record of the Chamber of Orphans at Amsterdam to the effect that 'Rembrandt van Rijn, widower, is authorized to remain in possession of the whole inheritance without giving any voucher (sonder bewijs te doen), whereto Hendrick Uylenburch has consented.'

[1] A now obsolete legal provision connected with inheritance.

This 'consent' of the representative of Saskia's family may be a mere form, as the terms of the will seem to give him no right to refuse, or it may have been partly conditioned by the fact that Rembrandt had lent him 1000 florins. Much difficulty, which arose in the future, would have been saved had an inventory been made of the property of the testatrix, but the omission is not to be charged against Rembrandt, as it was strictly in accordance with the provisions of the instrument.

CHAPTER V

REMBRANDT'S LATER LIFE, 1642–1669

Change in Rembrandt's life and fortunes after the death of Saskia. His relations with the nurse of Titus : and with Hendrickje Stoffels. Why Rembrandt did not marry Hendrickje. Her use to him as a model. Titus van Rijn, and his appearance in Rembrandt's works. Financial troubles arising from the purchase of the house in the Breestraat. Rembrandt's bankruptcy, and the sale of his collections. Effect of this upon the artist. Alleged visit to England. Partnership of Hendrickje and Titus. The new home on the Rozengracht. Depreciated value of the artist's work. Deaths of Hendrickje and Titus. The last days.

The ten years from the settlement in Amsterdam in 1632 to the death of Saskia in 1642, which include the eight years of married life, were in an outward sense the most successful in Rembrandt's career. The period began with his first important commission for a group of portraits, the 'Lesson on Anatomy,' and ended with his most ambitious effort in this department, the so-called 'Sortie' or 'Night-Watch.' The years 1642 to 1656 were on the other hand years of gradually declining worldly fortunes and worldly estimation, that ended in social and financial ruin.

Up to this point we have seen no reason from a business aspect to blame Rembrandt's conduct, for he had only

taken the ordinary risks that most professional men are accustomed to face. He was in possession of health and friends, and had the inspiriting consciousness of growing powers of expression in the art, the infinite possibilities of which he was coming more and more to realize. The secret of Rembrandt's failure was mainly personal, though it was also to some extent due to a change in the public estimation of his art for which his 'Sortie' was partly responsible. As will be seen when the time comes to analyze this masterpiece, the picture is open to criticism on the grounds of its forced effect, and of the painter's neglect to observe the conditions applicable to a commission of this kind. The picture was on these grounds criticized. This would in itself have done no harm, and might well have roused that sort of artistic controversy that is cynically termed 'a good advertisement.' For this however, it was necessary that Rembrandt's friends should rally round him, and should be prepared to proclaim any extravagance or eccentricity he might be guilty of a new artistic gospel. Just at this period, unfortunately, Rembrandt was alienating his friends of higher station by personal conduct that seems to us as foolish as it was reprehensible.

At Saskia's death the only surviving child of the marriage, Titus, was but nine months old, and a nurse was found for him in the person of a trumpeter's widow, named Geertgen Dircks. With this person Rembrandt formed some sort of connection that gave her a hold over him strong enough to furnish matter for actions at law, while a little later we find him in intimate association with a younger woman, named Hendrickje Stoffels, who it

seems never was his wife though she bore him two children. The birth of the second, which happened in 1654, had been preceded a few months earlier by a summons served upon the guilty couple to appear before a Consistory of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam, on the ground that they were 'living together without being united in legitimate marriage.'[1] This shows that, two years before his bankruptcy in 1656, Rembrandt's way of life had resulted in open scandal. The connection with Hendrickje, that possesses its pleasing features, will be noticed later on ; the more sordid story of Geertgen Dircks must here have a word.

There is a drawing by Rembrandt in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem that gives us the back view—Rembrandt's backs are often as expressive as the front views of other artists—of a solid Dutch 'huisvrouw,' broad of beam and of mature years, and on this in a hand of the seventeenth century are written the words 'de minnemoer van Titus'—'the nurse of Titus.' In the British Museum there is a drawing of the same figure in front view, easily to be identified by the dress, and here we see a face that strikes us as hard and even slightly aggressive. Some painted portraits in which Geertgen has been recognized give a more pleasing impression of her. One of these is the Hermitage picture, No. 829. In the Ellesmere picture of Hannah and Samuel she has served as model with her charge Titus at her knee. She appears in these a kindly buxom person of about 50.

In the year 1648 Geertgen Dircks made a will[2] by which

1 Scheltema, *Rembrand*, French edition, Paris, 1866, p. 61.

2 The following is based on documents given in *Oud Holland*, III, 95 f.

she constituted Titus the heir to the most part of her property. A year and a half later however, she announced her intention of leaving the house, and broke out against Rembrandt with vehement abuse, threatening to revoke her testament. We learn nevertheless from an affidavit, sworn before a notary on October 1, 1649, that an agreement between Rembrandt and Geertgen had been made in the June of that year, according to which the testament was to remain in force, while Rembrandt on his part bound himself to pay her a lump sum of 150 florins and thenceforward yearly 160 florins, and anything more that might be necessary according to his discretion, and Geertgen undertook in return to make no further claims upon her employer. A few days later however, we learn on the declaration of a witness that Geertgen was inveighing against Rembrandt 'very fiercely and unreasonably' ('seer hevich en onredelyck'), and protesting that 'she would not even hear the agreement read, much less sign it,' the ground of her discontent apparently being the insufficiency of the sum allowed for her maintenance. A draft of another agreement has been printed, in which increased payments on the part of Rembrandt are mentioned, and reference is made to Geertgen's possessions in silver and gold and jewels. At this juncture however, Geertgen brings an action against Rembrandt in the Court of Matrimonial Causes, in which she distinctly alleges that he had given her verbal promises of marriage and a ring, and had exercised over her the rights of a husband, and demands marriage or a proper maintenance. Rembrandt in reply as good as admits the last allegation but denies any promise of marriage. The

Court ignored the former plea, but sustained her alternative plea for maintenance, and decreed that Rembrandt should pay her yearly two hundred florins for her life, a sum greater than those mentioned in the previous agreements.[1]

Other records[2] show that not long afterwards Geertgen went out of her mind, and in 1650 was sent to a hospital at Gouda, Rembrandt paying for the cost of removal and for her maintenance. If an agreement on the lines of the judgment of the Court just quoted were actually in force, Rembrandt would in this only be carrying out its provisions. As a fact however, a few years later, in 1656, at a time when his own financial troubles had reached their height, he brings an action against Geertgen's representatives for the repayment of the sums thus laid out.[3] How this matter ended we are not clearly informed.

The story, the main features of which are revealed in these documents, is only too easily understood. The trumpeter's widow may have had a warm heart, and affection for her tender little charge may have prompted her testamentary scheme; but there can be little doubt that she intended to become the mistress of the household, and that she would use the arts traditional in situations of the kind. It can be inferred from the documents that the gold and silver and jewels she possessed had been presented to her by the artist, who in a matter of the kind was notably lavish, and Rembrandt must have seriously compromised himself with her, independently of the actual

[1] Bredius, Nieuwe Rembrandtiana, in *Oud Holland*, XVII, 5. See also *Urkunden*, No. 123, note.

[2] *Oud Holland*, VIII, 175.

[3] Ibid.

'Unsittlichkeit' in which the two may have been equally to blame. The considerable sum he had to pay her yearly shows that unprejudiced authorities held him accountable to her, and we may leave the subject with the cautious summary of Dr. Bredius 'a judgement we neither are able nor desire to pass, for we did not know Geertgen Dircks and we have no assurance how she really behaved to Rembrandt.'[1]

One fact, which is not greatly to the artist's credit, may explain both the fury of the widow and her subsequent mental alienation. This was the intervention in the domestic dispute of a young and comely rival. In the case of the affidavit of October 1, 1649, Rembrandt's version of the agreement with Geertgen rested on the testimony of a witness who was a member of his household. This was Hendrickje Stoffels, a country maid from Ransdorp in N. Holland,[2] who was then twenty-three years of age.

Hendrickje became in Rembrandt's later years the sun of his life and of his art, but as has been noticed already, his connection with her was from the moral point of view an illicit one, and the cause of open scandal and disgrace. We are not told when she entered the artist's household, but her face and form when quite a girl have been recog-

1 *Oud Holland*, XVII, 5.

2 This is a matter of inference. Houbraken says he 'had for wife' a peasant girl from Raarep by Ransdorp in Waterland, and probably this 'wife' is really Hendrickje. Hendrickje had a brother-in-law living in 1661 at Breedevoort by Zutfen (*Urkunden*, No. 243), and what ground there is for Valentiner's extraordinary suggestion that she was a foundling (*Rembrandt u. Seine Umgebung*, p. 43) we cannot see. The notion so often repeated that she could not write her own name is refuted by her perfectly legible autograph signature to a deed printed in *Oud Holland*, III, p. 96. As a rule, it is true, she signs with a cross.

nized both in the charming, though rather heavily tinted, 'Young Girl at a Window,' at the Dulwich Gallery, and the Mary of the 'Holy Family' at St. Petersburg, Plate 12, postea, p. 280, both of 1645. Rembrandt must have been at once impressed by the fresh and winsome personality, and her rise to a position of confidential intimacy will have been watched by Geertgen with a growing concern that explains her final outburst of wrath against her employer.

It is a pity that this intimacy did not lead to marriage. No one would have wished the artist to marry the trumpeter's widow, but a union with Hendrickje offered many advantages. She was not like Saskia a lady of birth and education; and the artist's more aristocratic friends and patrons would have felt it a misalliance. Such unions however have often proved even in a worldly sense far from unsuccessful, and in any case Rembrandt was himself a man of the people, of simple stay-at-home habits, and very limited personal needs or social ambitions.[1] Hendrickje was not only a very comely girl, but seems in spite of the disadvantages of her position to have been liked by her neighbours. At a later period, as we shall see, she exhibited business capacity. That she would have made Rembrandt an excellent wife we cannot doubt. The obstacle to their marriage was a financial one, and depended on that clause in Saskia's will which provided that if Rembrandt married again his life interest in her property

1 Sandrart says he was no spendthrift, and Houbraken that when he was at work bread and cheese or a pickled herring were enough for his needs, and both note his preference for the company of humble folk. The drawing in Mr. Heseltine's collection, given on Plate 13, is a highly characteristic self-portrait of Rembrandt in the fifties. See postea, p. 114.

PLATE 12.—THE HOLY FAMILY. 1515

St. Petersburg

To face p. 82

should terminate.[1] The circumstances of the Rembrandt household in the late forties were however so precarious that this loss could not be faced, and the almost inevitable result followed. A union of the kind now formed between the artist and his maid must always be regarded as a much more reputable affair than ordinary looseness of life, but Protestant Holland in the seventeenth century, like some modern countries of to-day, was censorious, and Hendrickje's kirk-session refused her her card for the communion.[2] We who can regard the situation from a distance must recognize with satisfaction that Rembrandt was at any rate faithful to his choice. He has been rightly described as essentially a man of home, caring first of all for his work and after that for the quiet and the homely joys of his own fireside. He never wandered abroad in search of the pleasures which a great and wealthy commercial city like Amsterdam offered in only too great abundance.

So settled became his life with Hendrickje and her little daughter, and with his son Titus, that people may have come to forget the scandal of 1654, and to regard the couple as to all intents and purposes man and wife. At any rate MM. Bredius and de Roever have printed a legal document of 1661, referring to some unimportant local matter, in which Hendrickje appeared as witness, and is called in the official record 'Juffe Hendrickyen Stoffels, *huysvrouwe* van Sr. Rembrant van Reyn, fijnschilder, out 38 jaerem,'[3]

1 In a deed of registration executed by Rembrandt in the year 1656 in favour of his son Titus, he expressly says that if he married a second time he would assign to Titus the whole heritage of his mother. Scheltema, *Rembrant*, 74.

2 *Urkunden*, No. 157.

3 'Mistress Hendrickje Stoffels, wife of Mr. Rembrant van Reyn, artist painter, 38 years old.' *Oud Holland*, VIII, 183.

where the title 'wife' may be regarded as significant of the position of respect and esteem the young woman had acquired in the eyes of her neighbours. It is open to any one, on the other hand, to construe the expression literally and regard it as evidence that at the date of the document the couple had actually gone through the form of marriage. The date of the marriage, if it took place at all, must have fallen between August 7 and October 20, 1661, for at the first date Hendrickje signed the will which shows that at the time she was not married to the father of her child, and the latter is the date of the legal document referred to above. There is no other proof of the wedding beyond the single word italicized in the document, and the absence of any hint of it in later documents, such as *Urkunden*, Nos. 311, 314, 315, leads us to discard the notion of it altogether. Hendrickje was ailing when she made her will but well enough in October 1661, to attend as a witness in the police-court. How much longer she lived after this we do not know, for this is the last record of her existence. In any case one imagines that the first thing Rembrandt would do if he had married his mistress would be to paint himself and her together, but there is no sign of such a work. This is really a fact of some significance in view of the theory that they never married. Though Rembrandt was painting his own portrait to the last, and though he was incessantly using Hendrickje as his model, there is no instance of a painting or etching in which there is a joint portrait, such as those of Rembrandt and Saskia. We regard this as implying a delicacy of feeling on the part of the artist and a respect for Saskia's memory that is wholly

PLATE 13.—REMBRANDT IN WORKING DRESS.
SELF-PORTRAIT. DRAWING
Heseltine Collection

To face p. 81

to his credit. Of course pieces like the Glasgow picture or the etching B. 192, where he shows himself drawing from Hendrickje as a model, come in a different category.

In a deposition made after the deaths of both Hendrickje and Rembrandt, one of those neighbours, who lived over-against the house in the Rozengracht to which the family had retired, testifies that she was very familiar with Hendrickje, and had often gone over with her the contents of her chest, where there were gold rings and silver work and clothes galore.[1] This chest at the time of Rembrandt's bankruptcy in 1656 was valued at 600 florins, and Hendrickje's will, which she made in 1661, shows her to have been possessed of some property. This was also, as we have seen, the case with Geertgen Dircks, who like Hendrickje had occupied a menial station. We are reminded of the remark of Sir Thomas Overbury about the Dutch of the time, that while few were very rich there were hardly any very poor. All the people in Rembrandt's circle at any rate, with the significant exception of himself, seem to have had goods about which it was worth while making a will.

Hendrickje's relations with Titus seem to have been very pleasing, and Dr. Bredius thinks he must have felt to her as a second mother. She writes of him in her will as the 'half-brother' of her own child Cornelia, and entered with him into partnership, as we shall see, in a business venture, wherein, as by far the elder participant, she must have taken the larger share of responsibility. Hendrickje presents herself on the whole as a far more interesting person than Saskia, and of all the figures which surround

1 *Oud Holland*, VIII, 184.

that of Rembrandt hers is the one on which we dwell with most satisfaction.

This satisfaction may be partly due to our gratitude to her for making such an excellent model. Rembrandt the painter owes her as much as Rembrandt the man. Hers is the face which his magic brush charms from amber half-tones to golden lights in the 'Girl' of the Salon Carré (Plate 14); hers the more homely countenance that smiles to us through the open window in the attractive study at Berlin.[1] Rembrandt painted her much later in matronly guise with her little daughter Cornelia as 'Venus and Cupid' at the Louvre, where she has lost her youthful charms. She was in full possession of these however when he showed her in a white wrapper, apparently fresh from the bath, but pranked with necklet and earrings, in a picture from Mr. C. Morrison's collection; while in a study at Glasgow she is sitting to him with wrapper thrown off for a figure of Bathsheba. For she was the original of the 'Bathsheba' of the Salle la Caze in the Louvre, the pearl among Rembrandt's studies of the nude (Plate 41), as well as of the later 'Susanna' at Berlin, of 1647, for which there are also painted studies. We are grateful here to Hendrickje for offering to the artist's eyes and to our own at any rate a well-proportioned torso. Of the lower part of the figure not much can be said. Indeed to judge from the nudes of Dürer and of Rembrandt, the women of their day and race can hardly have possessed amongst them a pair of delicately modelled limbs, or a body that did not beg for a straight-fronted corset. It is Hendrickje, too, who in the National Gallery is paddling deliciously in the cool

1 'The Girl at a Window,' No. 828B, see Plate 1.

PLATE 14.—STUDY FROM HENDRICKJE STOFFELS

Louvre, Salon Carré

To face p. 86

stream, with shift lifted to her knees and face looking down.

Titus van Rijn has been more than once mentioned. He was the only surviving child of four, and died at the age of twenty-seven, six months after his marriage. These facts suggest a delicacy of constitution which indeed seems indicated in many at any rate of his portraits.[1] With this delicacy he certainly united a refinement which we miss in his more robust progenitor, and his face is comely and sympathetic and is touched at times with poetry and romance. The drawing in the Stockholm collection (Plate 15, and postea, p. 143) gives a characteristic likeness.

We can recognize Titus in infancy and at all periods till near his death. He is often the subject of a painted portrait, and some of Rembrandt's most fascinating pictures have his face and form for their theme. The winning little face, pale and delicate, touched like a Velasquez, in Lord Spencer's collection,[2] is the face of Titus as a child, and we can trace him as he grows up, through Lord Crawford's picture which shows him as the schoolboy writing at a desk, and the Wallace collection example, to the beautiful Vienna 'Titus Reading,' where the face is full of soul; and the somewhat more mature 'Titus' of Captain Holford's noble picture at Dorchester House, where the slight moustache shows him already a man. On some supposed studies from his figure in the

1 M. Michel writes of his 'physionomie toujours un peu maladive,' *Rembrandt*, p. 433, and Valentiner, who recognizes him in about seventy examples of Rembrandt's work, says that we almost always find him represented with dreamy looking and often with melancholy eyes. *Rembrandt und Seine Umgebung*, p. 28.

2 Called erroneously 'William Prince of Orange.'

nude, see postea, p. 144. He appears frequently in the compositions both religious and secular, and figures as the youthful Joseph, or the youthful Christ, or still more often as Tobias, in numerous designs sketched, painted, or etched. One of the most expressive figures of a simple kind in Rembrandt's biblical work is the 'Joseph before Potiphar and Potiphar's Wife' in the Hermitage, and this is evidently studied from Titus. He takes the legs of the wounded man in the 'Good Samaritan' picture at the Louvre, and is the angel who inspires the evangelist Matthew in the same collection. A really brilliant conjecture by Valentiner has brought him into connection with the splendid though hitherto enigmatical picture of the van der Hoop collection at Amsterdam, the so-called 'Jewish Bride.' It is now suggested that this is Titus with his youthful spouse Magdalena van Loo, whom he married on February 10, 1668. Magdalena was a family connection, and she has in her turn been recognized on some of Rembrandt's canvases, such as the 'Young Girl Learning on a Sill' at Stockholm,[1] No. 484.

The question of the place filled in Rembrandt's household by Titus and by Hendrickje Stoffels is connected with that of the financial fortunes of the artist, the course of which must now be traced.

There was formerly a common impression that Rembrandt's troubles were due to pecuniary pressure exercised upon him by the representatives of his wife. The latter have sometimes been considered exacting creditors who forced Rembrandt into bankruptcy; while on the other hand the artist has been envisaged by others as

[1] *Rembrandt*, etc., p. 55 f.

PLATE 15.—DRAWING OF SEATED YOUTH,
TITUS VAN RIJN
Stockholm

To face p. 88

something like a defaulter, with whom it was necessary to be severe. The fact is that the troubles were brought about quite independently of Saskia's relatives, who really intervened in the interests of the whole household, though their *locus standi* was that of Titus's next-of-kin. The actual creditors were another set of people altogether, and the aim of the Uylenburchs was to rescue as much of the whole property as they could from their hands, on the ground that it was part of Saskia's estate.

Rembrandt's passion for collecting works of art and articles of virtù[1] has already been referred to, and it has been noticed that in face of a desired object he was regardless of price. Although, at least from the year 1632, he must have been making a handsome income, when he bought his house in 1639 he appears to have had no sums laid by. In that very year indeed we find him writing to Constantin Huygens about the payment for two 'Passion' pictures executed on commission for Prince Frederick Henry, and using the expression that the money would just then be extremely useful to him.[2] The arrangement for defraying the cost of the house by instalments shows that he was, as it were, living from hand to mouth, and it is somewhat surprising that in the circumstances part of Saskia's capital was not used for the investment.

The arrangement was that 1200 florins were to be paid on entry in May 1639, and 2050 more within a year, while the remainder of the debt of 13,000 florins was to be liquidated in five or six years, interest being paid on the outstanding balances.[3] In 1647 not only was the amount

1 *Oud Holland*, v, 214.
2 Scheltema, *Rembrant*, p. 94.
3 *Urkunden*, No. 64.

not reduced but Rembrandt had got into arrears with the interest, and finally in 1653 the vendor pressed for payment of the large sum still due, which, with the arrears of interest, came to nearly 9000 florins. Rembrandt now had recourse to a very common but very dangerous financial device, and effected a loan in another quarter, with the proceeds of which he met the long over-due claim for the house. In 1653 he borrowed from Cornelis Witsen, a prominent citizen of Amsterdam, and from one van Hertsbeek, 8400 florins in equal shares, raising the balance of the 9000 florins by a mortgage on the house itself of 1170 florins. The loans were secured on the whole of Rembrandt's property, and repayment was to be made in the course of 1654. The same year, 1653, we learn that his old friend Jan Six advanced him 1000 florins, but shortly afterwards hypothecated his claim to a certain Gerbrand Ornia.[1] The significance of this last will be noticed later on.

The change of creditors was unfortunate, for Witsen and van Hertsbeek pressed for repayment (which Rembrandt had actually undertaken to make within a year!), and the outcome of the transaction was the artist's bankruptcy, which was declared in 1656.[2] This involved, and was followed within a couple of years by, the forced sale of Rembrandt's house and all his possessions, including his artistic collections and a large number of his own

1 *Oud Holland*, VIII, 182. Ornia afterwards transferred the debt in his turn to another, and it was the cause of a good deal of after trouble.

2 Scheltema, *Rembrant*, 72 f., printed a number of the official documents bearing on these transactions, and others are given in *Oud Holland*, V, 215 f.

works in the form both of pictures and of etchings and drawings. Of these an inventory had of course to be prepared, and this has fortunately been preserved to us. It is of incalculable value as enabling us to reproduce before our minds the surroundings of the great artist in the time of his prosperity. Use has already been made of it for this purpose (ante, p. 68). Witsen, who was a prudent man and burgomaster of the town, reimbursed himself for his loan of 4200 florins out of the proceeds of the sale of the collections which were certainly the personal property of the artist, but the disposal of the rest of the proceeds of the liquidation involved difficulties with the representatives of Saskia and of her heir, Titus van Rijn.

It has been already noticed that the intervention in Rembrandt's affairs of the latter was due to the desire to save Titus's inheritance from alien hands. With this in view they asked Rembrandt in 1647 for that reckoning or account, the production of which had been expressly waived at the time of Saskia's death. Rembrandt estimated that at that date, 1642, the joint property of himself and his wife amounted to 40,750 florins,[1] and it seems to have been agreed that half of this, or 20,375 florins, was the share that had devolved to Titus. Titus had now a legal representative, who had been nominated by the Chamber of Orphans, and, acting under his directions, early in 1656, before the declaration of bankruptcy, Rembrandt registered a deed in the Chamber of Orphans by which he made over to Titus the ownership of the house in the Breestraat, as part of his mother's succession, and pledged all his other goods to secure him in possession.

1 *Oud Holland*, III, 86.

This transaction did not appear in the proceedings in bankruptcy and made no difference in the sale of the house by order of the liquidator, which took place in due course in 1658, and realized a sum of 11,218 florins. No sooner however was the sale effected than Titus's representative, who was now a lawyer of good parts, named Louis Craeyers, gave notice to arrest the proceeds of it in favour of Titus. Meanwhile the fellow creditor of Witsen, van Hertsbeek, had secured payment to himself, out of the proceeds of the sale, of the 4200 florins due to him, but was immediately sued for the return of this amount by Craeyers, and after the case had been carried through three courts he was compelled to disgorge what he had received and to pay the costs of the suit, Craeyers in the name of Titus remaining master of the situation. In the final settlement of the accounts, in 1665, Titus received as his share of the estate 6952 florins.[1]

It will have been noted that Rembrandt's house was sold for some 1700 florins less than he gave for it. The ultimate purchaser however in 1658 was the third to whom the house had been assigned. The first buyer agreed to pay 13,600 florins, which was more than Rembrandt had paid for it, and the second 12,000, but they were both rejected through failure to produce sufficient caution. These prices show that the original sum paid by Rembrandt was not at all extravagant, and that the property had not really declined in value. This fact might lead us to expect a similar result from the sale of the collections, but the actual outcome of this presents a startling contrast. Rembrandt paid highly and sometimes extravagantly for

[1] The accounts are transcribed by Scheltema and others.

what he bought, but the objects were good of their kind, and the fact that they had formed part of so notable a collection might have been expected to inflate their value. Independently moreover of these suppositions, we have the testimony of expert valuers, who in 1659 reckoned the worth of the objects of virtù at 11,000 florins and of the pictures at 6400 florins, or 17,400 florins in all.[1] It is the most extraordinary fact connected with these transactions that the whole proceeds of the sales of these objects which took place at different dates between 1657 and 1659 was only about 5000 florins! Bürger's note on this strange result is worthy of quotation.

'The "goods" thus sold were the collections of pictures, of engravings, of objects of art, and of drawings, that were sold at several dates pretty far apart. One sees by these curious accounts that Rembrandt's collections did not produce in all as much as 5000 florins. . . . Now, without mentioning anything else, there appeared in the inventory of 1656 more than *sixty pictures* by Rembrandt, with a quantity of portfolios and albums full of his sketches and drawings, and of complete sets of his engraved work, in all the most valuable "states"! Rembrandt thus saw himself stripped at once of all that he had preserved of his own productions through more than five-and-twenty years of his residence at Amsterdam, and of all those artistic treasures in pictures by other masters, drawings, engravings of all the schools, marbles, casts, arms and armour, costumes, and the like, which he had amassed at great cost during his long period of prosperity, and for which he had expended not only the patrimony which he held in

[2] *Oud Holland*, III, 90.

common with Saskia (estimated at her death at 40,000 florins) but also all that he had acquired by his own labour through the fourteen years after his wife's death. . . .'[1]

At the moment, no doubt, to part from these artistic treasures was a cause of poignant regret, but those who have most studied the idiosyncrasies of the artist and the collector will be the least inclined to weep over the catastrophe. To the born collector the chief delight is the actual acquisition of the treasure; after it has been duly admired by his friends and compared with the bits not quite so good in their collections, he is soon ready to sell it and buy something else. As will be seen in the sequel, in his latest years Rembrandt was again surrounded by some of these glittering arms, these strings of pearls and beads, these oriental rags, that he had loved; though they were now provided for him by others. The glorious colouring of some of his latest works, such as the 'Family' at Brunswick, and the 'Jewish Bride' among the van der Hoop pictures at Amsterdam, may have been partly caught from the 'rariteyten' with which Hendrickje and Titus had managed again to surround him. The alienation for such small sums of his accumulated pictures might be galling to his artistic pride, but in the inner chambers of Rembrandt's mind there was a gallery of pictures whose artistic quality as far outshone the best of those as the portrait of Jan Six outshines the 'Coppenol' of St. Petersburg. The Rembrandt of the failure of 1656 is the Rembrandt, let us remember, of some of the finest of the etched portraits, the 'Haarings,'

[1] Scheltema, French ed., p. 90, note.

the 'Tholinx,' the 'Lutma'; and, among the pictures, of the 'Deyman' Anatomy, the 'Jacob Blessing' at Cassel, the 'Adoration of the Kings' at Buckingham Palace, and the Hermitage 'Denial of Peter,' and the man whose creative imagination was framing those majestic pieces can hardly have wasted much regret on the earlier productions of his brush. The real loss, and one that could not well be repaired, was that of the specially fine 'states' of his etchings which must have been represented in his portfolios. The etched plate in his time could not be steeled, and wore rapidly, though it could be worked over as Turner worked over his scraped coppers, and to the eye of the artist there may have been qualities in proofs thrown away so scandalously at the sale that could never be secured again.

Rembrandt's house in the Breestraat was sold on February 1, 1658, though the purchaser did not actually complete all formalities and obtain possession till the end of 1660.[1] The history of his own personal movements for the next few years is uncertain, till we find him in 1663 again established in a modest but comfortable domicile on the Rozengracht, or Quay of Roses, where he resided till his death in 1669. It is now numbered 184 and is marked by an inscription. There is a curious record preserved in Vertue's Diaries to the effect that Rembrandt visited England in 1661–2 and lived for sixteen or eighteen months in Hull, and one of Vertue's informants stated that a Swedish portrait painter possessed a picture signed by Rembrandt and dated at York in the early part of 1662.[2]

1 *Urkunden*, No. 234.
2 *Ibid.* No. 394: *Oud Holland*, XV, 193 f.

Of such a foreign sojourn we have no other notice, and it is of course doubted.[1] On the interesting question thus raised, some additional evidence must be awaited before it will be finally settled, but it is worth noting (1) that there is no documentary proof of the presence of Rembrandt in Amsterdam from Dec. 15, 1660, to August 22, 1662, and that from the year 1662 there is only one dated picture and no etching. (2) The great majority of the fourteen pictures dated 1661 are of religious subjects of a Catholic type, studies of monks, nuns, pilgrims, etc., and are of a kind that are exceptional in his work but might have been painted had he sojourned for a while in the Catholic Netherlands, whence he might have passed over to England. (3) On the other hand, the two great pictures of a public kind, the 'Syndics,' and the 'Claudius Civilis' for the Town Hall at Amsterdam, were in progress just at this time. The former is dated twice, 1661 and 1662, and we know that the 'Civilis' was delivered by the middle of 1662, though not yet fully paid for,[2] and as it covered about twenty-six square metres of canvas it took some time to paint. Hence these years 1661–2 are very unlikely ones for Rembrandt to have been away from Amsterdam, where these works must have been carried out.

In any case, whether Rembrandt stayed on in Amsterdam or not, the month of December of the year 1660 witnessed the opening of a new act in the sombre drama of his outward life, and Hendrickje Stoffels reappears as a good genius, as practical as she is kind.

[1] See Michel, p. 483.

[2] *Urkunden*, No. 253. See also No. 249.

Hendrickje and Titus, then aged respectively 37 and 19, on December 15, 1660, sign a deed of partnership in a business, that they had already started and that they now agree to carry on during the life of Rembrandt and for six years thereafter. This mention of the artist seems to show that the project was devised in his interest to secure for him and for the household generally some settled source of maintenance, and we can imagine how the gloomy days in the temporary quarters in which they had found refuge may have been lightened by eager discussions over the scheme, in which the mature common sense and shrewdness of the peasant-bred Hendrickje matched the youthful zeal of the refined and sensitive Titus. The nature of the business is remarkable. They were to open an art-dealer's establishment and traffic in 'pictures, prints, copper-plates and woodcuts, with impressions therefrom, objects of virtù (rariteyten), and all things relating thereto,' and it is specially provided in the deed that Rembrandt is to have no part nor share in the business side of the venture. The provision was clearly in his interest and was designed to relieve him from all responsibility in case of failure, and to secure any profits that might accrue from all danger of seizure by his creditors, who, we must remember, were always with him.[1]

It is obvious, of course, that the sale of Rembrandt's own works was also in contemplation, and here again surprise must be expressed that the productions of Rembrandt's own brush and etching point do not seem to figure as substantial assets in these financial schemes and arrangements. The two parties to the deed state

1 *Urkunden*, No. 233.

that they are relying on the expert aid that Rembrandt, and he alone, can afford them in their transactions. This aid he was to give in return for his board and lodging. Meanwhile they advance him a substantial sum in florins, Hendrickje contributing 800, which he is to repay when he is able to gain anything by his own work! For all that we learn from the deed, Rembrandt might have been a futile dilettante, instead of one of the greatest and most productive artists that ever lived; and his hand in 1660 might have been palsied with age or disease, instead of being the hand that at this very time was executing one of the three or four finest pictures of the world, the monumental 'Syndics' of 1661–2, Plate 16. To choose the year of the 'Syndics,' a work not only Rembrandt's acknowledged masterpiece but one for which he must have been duly paid, for inditing the clause about the produce of the labour of his hands, seems like a piece of the unconscious humour into which legal draughtsmen are sometimes betrayed.

This will be a favourable opportunity for considering Rembrandt's position in these later years from the point of view of his social status and the opportunities he had for gaining money by his work.

Rembrandt, we have already seen, was his own enemy, and his comparative isolation in the fifties, on which depended in part the depreciated value of his pictures, may be ascribed primarily to the irritation of his friends of the better classes at his unseemly goings-on. Sandrart expressly says that he would have gained considerable wealth 'had he known how to conduct himself with people.' The change in the attitude towards the painter

PLATE 16.—THE SYNDICS

of his friend Jan Six is significant of much. Rembrandt and he had lived on terms of some intimacy. When Six's Tragedy of *Medea* was published in 1648, Rembrandt had etched the plate known as the 'Marriage of Jason and Creusa' B. 112, for the frontispiece,[1] and in Six's book of drawings called 'Pandora' there are two by Rembrandt's hand, one of which is a most beautiful fully-shaded wash-drawing of Six's mother. In the artist's handwriting in the book are the words 'Rembrandt aen Joanus Six, 1652.'[2] Up to this date, 1652, all had gone well, but in 1653 Rembrandt obtained from Six a loan of 1000 gulden, and from this time onwards the relations were changed. Six hypothecated the debt due to him by the artist to a third party, one Gerbrand Ornia,[3] and in this gave what looks like a sign that he wished his personal relations with his former friend to cease. About this time Six married Margaretha, the daughter of the famous surgeon Nicolaes Tulp, who was Rembrandt's early friend and patron, and in 1656 the portrait of the bride was painted, not however by the artist of the 'Anatomy Lesson' or the etched portrait of 'Six at the Window,' but by Govert Flinck. The passing over of Rembrandt on an occasion of the kind by clients who had a personal connection with him seems very marked. That Six appreciated Rembrandt's female portraits may be inferred from the fact that the famous Cassel portrait of 'Saskia' was in his possession,[4] and there must have been some strong personal reason for not sending Margaretha to Rembrandt's studio.

1 *Oud Holland*, XI, 156.
2 *Urkunden*, No. 134.
3 *Urkunden*, No. 178.
4 Ibid. Nos. 195, 386.

Rembrandt belonged not only by birth but by nature to the lower *bourgeoisie*, and, as we are told about him by more than one writer, he was more at home in the society of small people than of great. He is reported by Sandrart as well as later on by Houbraken to have favoured the society of his social inferiors, and Baldinucci, who, we must remember, never saw him, writes with an Italian's fastidiousness about his supposed plebeian countenance and boorish ways. It is probable that after Saskia's death Rembrandt was ready to give up the efforts he had previously made to keep in with the representatives of Amsterdam culture and breeding, and the embroglio with Geertgen Dircks only accentuated what was already a fact. His personal surroundings and habits, combined with the irregularity of his *ménage*, may have contributed to make it difficult for sitters of the more refined classes to frequent his studio. This would certainly be the case if he had already adopted the habit noticed by Baldinucci, of wiping his paint brushes on the hinder part of his garment.[1]

We know however that in his later years, though sitters were comparatively few, Rembrandt did actually paint and etch portraits of persons of position and even prominence, and we should naturally expect this to have proved a substantial if limited source of income. He received besides, about 1661, a commission from the city of Amsterdam to paint a large decorative picture for the Town Hall, and one for a corporation picture from the guild of dealers in cloth. A corporation picture of an 'Anatomy' subject (Dr. Deyman's) dates from 1656. What did all this imply from the point of view of finance?

1 *Urkunden*, p. 422.

With regard to the prices obtained by Rembrandt at the various periods of his career we have some scattered items of information. Putting together all that is known of the conditions of the earlier and most prosperous epoch Bode has arrived at the conclusion, as we have seen, that from 1630 to 1645 Rembrandt was making £5000 to £6000 a year. The data for such a calculation are partly derived from evidence collected in 1658–9 to justify Rembrandt's estimate of his property at the time of Saskia's death.[1] As half of this property was reckoned to belong to her estate, and as this portion would be protected from Rembrandt's creditors, it was the artist's interest to make the total estimate as high as possible. Hence evidence was taken to justify the figure he had named. There is an affidavit for instance about Saskia's jewels, which include the pearl necklaces and ear-pendants we are so familar with in the pictures. The payment for the 'Night-Watch' of 1600 gulden is attested, and there are two affidavits as to payments for private commissioned portraits, one about a portrait of Andries de Graeff, burgomaster of Amsterdam, who paid 500 gulden about the year 1642, and another about a portrait or portraits of a client and his wife, for which at the same period Rembrandt received 500 gulden. There remain also various records of valuations made of pictures by Rembrandt, and also records of actual sales. Thus in 1640, 'A Priest' by Rembrandt, no doubt one of his fanciful so-called 'Rabbis,' was valued at 100 gulden,[2] and in 1647, 'A Head' by Rembrandt at 60 gulden.[3] The most important records of actual sales are those connected with

1 *Urkunden*, Nos. 205–209.

2 Ibid. No. 77.

3 *Urkunden*, No. 112.

the 'Passion' pictures at Munich, for which as we have seen he was receiving in the thirties 600 gulden a-piece (ante, p. 66). In the year 1646 Rembrandt delivered to the Stadhouder Frederick Henry two more of the series, and was paid for them just double the previous price, that is 1200 gulden each.[1] Furthermore, in 1657 there was a valuation made of a large collection of pictures of all schools, left by a dealer in works of art, the whole estimate amounting to 36,500 gulden. Of all the 400 pictures, that valued at the highest price was one by Rembrandt, the 'Woman Taken in Adultery' of the National Gallery, painted in 1644, which was rated at the large price of 1500 gulden; 600 gulden was put down for a 'Lazarus,' 400 for the 'Taking Down from the Cross' at St. Petersburg, of 1634, 250 for 'A Portrait' by Rembrandt, and 50 for 'An Antique Head' from the same brush.

If Rembrandt was actually paid at a high rate up to 1646, and his pictures were still so highly valued by connoisseurs in 1657, how could it come about that at the end of 1660 his gains should be spoken of as something problematical, and that we should have the extraordinary statement, made by a member of the artistic community and a family connection of Rembrandt, to the effect that at the time of his death his art had so sunk in repute that a head by Rembrandt could be bought for six stuivers, or less than half a florin, though, he adds, the prices after his death soon began to rise![2] In view of this rather startling

1 Ibid. No. 107.

2 *Urkunden*, No. 385. The information is given by a son of the painter Wybrand de Geest, who was Saskia's brother-in-law.

piece of testimony, it would be interesting were we able to ascertain what proportion the price received for the 'Syndics' of 1661–2, bore to that obtained by the 'Night Watch' of 1642, or what Rembrandt would be paid for the Deyman 'Anatomy,' or for the 'Civilis,' for which he may not have been recompensed at all, since it was returned on his hands. We have unfortunately no information on any of these points.

It is evident however that the gains, such as they were, from these and other pictures were hypothecated before receipt in part payment of Rembrandt's debts. One Lodewijk van Ludick, who seems to have been a good friend to the artist, had indulged in the doubtful speculation of buying from Gerbrand Ornia the debt originally due to Six, and there are various documents that show the arrangements made for its repayment, and the obvious failure of Rembrandt to make any serious effort to carry them out. We see from these documents that there must have been a lien in favour of creditors on all Rembrandt might acquire. In the case of the portraits, it has been conjectured that they may have been reckoned as instalments of payments due, or long over-due, and so have had only a negative financial value. In one of the agreements with van Ludick, Rembrandt promises to paint his portrait, and undertakes till the debt is paid to give him stated proportionate parts of what he gained by his art.[1]

It is significant that many of the later portraits, especially among the etchings, are of persons with whom Rembrandt became connected through his financial mis-

1 *Urkunden*, No. 253.

fortunes. Francen, the dealer in works of art, stood by Rembrandt to the last, and should have the credit which is so often erroneously given to the fastidious Jan Six. Rembrandt etched his portrait about 1656. (See Plate 6.) The two Haarings, father and son, were officials of the Bankruptcy Court. The 'Bruyningh' of the magnificent Cassel portrait of 1652 was cousin to the secretary of the said Court. We are ignorant of the conditions under which Rembrandt painted the famous portrait of Jan Six. Bode dates it at about 1654, when the two were no longer *liés*, but the date is only a conjecture.

Independently however of the portraits and heads there were Rembrandt's religious pictures which had once fetched such good prices and been valued so highly up to 1657. It needs hardly to be said that the style of painting of these earlier religious pictures was not one that Rembrandt carried into his later years. He could not have gone on painting in this style in the fifties, and of course the people who liked this kind of work could not be expected to appreciate the broader treatment of the latest pictures, such as the 'Scourging' at Darmstadt or the St. Petersburg 'Return of the Prodigal.' But there are latish pictures carefully finished and on a comparatively small scale, that ought to have won popular approval. Take for example 'Joseph before Potiphar,' of 1655, at St. Petersburg and Berlin, or the 'Adoration of the Magi,' at Buckingham Palace, of 1657. It is difficult to imagine any modern community interested in art where such pictures would not find appreciation. They have not only great artistic qualities, but are sensibly planned, and clear and interesting to every one who has read the Bible. Why was it not

possible for an experienced dealer like Francen to arrange a market for pieces of this kind, and for Hendrickje and Titus to see that the painter took proper pains with them? It has been suggested that Rembrandt's eyesight was failing him in the later years, and that this accounts for the broad and summary treatment he then favoured to the exclusion of more detailed work which is always more popular among the many. We have heard of this supposed failure of eyesight in the case of other great painters, and it might equally well be alleged of Velasquez whose latest work is as summary as Rembrandt's. In Rembrandt's case there is some little reason for the suggestion because he certainly aged soon and rapidly, and it is perhaps a significant fact that after 1661 we find no trace of his continued activity in etching.

It seems probable that the chief profits derived by the new firm, van Rijn, Stoffels and Co., from the sale of the sleeping partner's work, came not from the pictures but the etchings. In the inventory of Rembrandt's possessions, made in view of the sale, no mention occurs of the coppers from which these were printed, and the presumption is that they were retained by the artist. These plates, retouched when necessary, would furnish a supply of prints for which there would probably be always a certain sale. The stories Houbraken tells about the devices resorted to by Rembrandt and Titus to enhance the value of the etchings, though in themselves absurd, at any rate let us see that business was being done in these commodities. As Michel remarks 'these etchings began to be sought after by amateurs; collections already in the artist's time of wide repute were being formed, and the different states

of the same engraving, in proportion to their rarity were sometimes attaining tolerably high prices.'[1] One particular class of the etchings however, out of which most money has probably been made in modern times, were evidently excluded from the commerce here spoken of. This class is that of the etched portraits. The art dealer, Clement de Jongh, the subject of one of these very portraits, died in 1679, leaving a large collection of prints, among which was an *œuvre* of Rembrandt. In this set of 73 plates no one of the famous later etched portraits is included,[2] and the inference seems to be that such prints were not sold in the open market. M. Hofstede de Groot suggests that the client in such cases purchased for his one payment the whole edition of the print, but the existence of so many states of some prints, such as those of Francen and the younger Haaring, B. 273, 275, makes it difficult to take this view. A client, if he had control over the plate, would hardly have tolerated the alterations in his countenance shown in some of these later states (see postea, p. 168).

Apart moreover from this business started in his interest, both Titus and Hendrickje chose these days of trouble for giving to Rembrandt proofs of their confidence that in the circumstances are not a little surprising. They made their wills, Titus in 1657 and Hendrickje in 1661, and in each case there is the same provision that is found in the testament of Saskia, to the effect that Rembrandt is to have a life interest in the property passing under the instrument. Titus makes Hendrickje and his half-sister, the little Cornelia, his heirs; while Hendrickje leaves her property

[1] *Rembrandt*, p. 459. [2] *Urkunden*, No. 346.

to her own child, with remainder to Titus, the half-brother of Cornelia. Rembrandt she makes guardian of the child, and gives him extensive control over the property he has to administer.[1] These facts again exhibit in a pleasant light the solidarity of the little community now thrust out into the cold, and the care of the younger members of it for the revered head. The death of Hendrickje Stoffels, the exact date of which is uncertain, must have left a blank in Rembrandt's life that nothing could fill, and conditions were of course still further changed when early in 1668 Titus married. He had a daughter, Titia, born in 1669, six months after the frail life of Titus himself had been cut short by fatal illness. His widow, Magdalena van Loo, did not long survive him, but Titia lived till 1725, when she died, apparently leaving no surviving children.[2]

By the loss of Hendrickje and the marriage and death of Titus, Rembrandt was bereft of those whose affection and solicitude had done so much to preserve contented and rich that inner life in which was rooted all the strength of his art. He was now left to the tender mercies of Magdalena van Loo, and the doubtless more congenial companionship of the little Cornelia, who, born in 1654, was at the date of Titus's marriage a girl of thirteen. At the age of eighteen, after the death of her father, she married a painter named Suythoff, and with him settled in the colony of Batavia. There they had two children, a son and a daughter, and it pleasantly rounds off the impression we derive from the earlier days of the united

1 *Oud Holland*, III, 103.

2 Scheltema gives the facts and dates. *Rembrandt*, French ed., p. 68 f.

family life of the van Rijns to know that Cornelia gave her mother's name to her infant daughter, and called her son Rembrandt.

The financial straits in which so much of the artist's later life had been passed appear to have grown still more severe in this final epoch, and one Rebecca Willems, who seems to have kept his house in the last months, declared after Rembrandt's death that he had told her several times that he had been obliged to take for household purposes some of the little store of gold that Hendrickje had left from her own private hoard to her daughter.[1]

Nothing more than this do we hear of the last days of the great painter, who died on October 4, 1669, and four days afterwards was laid to rest in the Westerkerk at Amsterdam.[2] An inventory of what the house in the Rozengracht contained was immediately drawn up, in the interests of the co-heiresses Cornelia and Titia van Rijn, but three rooms which contained 'pictures, drawings, rarities, antiques, and the like,' were sealed up by the notary.[3] It must be remembered that Rembrandt died, as we should say, an undischarged bankrupt, and he had nothing he could call his own but his clothes and his painting materials (. . . alleenlijck sijne cleederen van linnen en wollen en 't schildergereetschap).[4] In the partnership agreement between Hendrickje and Titus his pictures and all that the sale of them brought in was to be the property of the firm, and would descend to Cornelia

1 *Urkunden*, No. 314.

2 Ibid. No. 307. The locality of Rembrandt's grave is now marked in the Westerkerk by an inscription, but the exact spot of interment is not known.

3 *Urkunden*, No. 306, § 2.

4 Ibid. No. 311.

and Titia according to the testaments of the members of the firm, their respective parents.

The illness and death of the painter of the 'Night Watch' passed to all appearance unnoticed, though the bare fact of his burial is attested by an official entry. The only expression of solicitude that we hear of comes from the side of the widow of Titus, and she is not anxious about her father-in-law's daily bread, but only about the little hoard of money on which Rembrandt had drawn for the expenses of housekeeping. Magdalena van Loo was perhaps querulous through sickness, for she died within a month, but all she could find to say in the house of death was 'I hope that father has not taken Cornelia's gold pieces, half of which were to come to me!'[1] So runs the only recorded epitaph on the greatest man that Holland has produced.

1 'Ick hoop niet, dat vader de goude pottstucken van Cornelia, daer mijn de helft van toecomen, genomen heeft.' —*Urkunden*, No. 315.

CHAPTER VI

REMBRANDT'S WORK IN DIFFERENT FIELDS: THE DRAWINGS

Rembrandt as draughtsman, etcher, and painter: how his works in the different fields are related.

General character of the drawings of Rembrandt: their number: reproductions of them: materials employed. Questions of authenticity and date.

Studies of animals, especially lions. The drawings of landscape: the Chatsworth sketch-book. Copies of Indian miniatures. Studies for portraits. Compositions from classical and sacred story. Good motives not afterwards carried out. Drawings actually carried out in etchings and pictures. Genre subjects: studies of beggars: of children. Titus in the drawings. Studies of the male figure: of the female nude.

Whatever technical process Rembrandt essayed, he expressed himself in the terms of that process, and as we watch his handling of brush, or etching-point, or graver, or chalk, or pen, we think in each case that this particular medium is the one specially suited to his genius.

As draughtsman we have but to give him a pen and bottle of ink, and any characteristic figure, or group, or perspective of trees or cottages, that meets his eye, is analysed in a moment into the lines and touches and strong square patches which these materials place at his command.

As etcher Rembrandt seems to start in idea from the two extremes of the untouched copper that would print blankly white, and the plate charged everywhere with ink an impression from which would give a saturated black, and he delights with the free sweep of the etching needle, the rugged gash of the dry-point, or the preciser incision of the graver, to make visible on the former a line as delicate as a thread of gossamer or a bold roughly-edged trait; and on the latter to bring light into the dark and play the one against the other with an effect almost weird in its magical suggestion; till from the thin line or the strong or from the broad chiaroscuro he has won a truth that these media seem expressly created to convey.

In the same way in his paintings, though certain parts of these are at times treated as studies in chiaroscuro that could equally well have been worked out on the copper, yet as a rule the effects he aims at are effects of oil-paint and the brush, and only in these media are they possible. No one knew better than Rembrandt that the resources of oil-technique are very varied and that the material lends itself to many methods of manipulation. At successive periods of his career and in connection with various motives and different scales of work, he brushes thinly or with rough granular texture, emulates the polished enamel of the impasto of Elsheimer or flings the broad touches upon the canvas with the impetuosity of Hals. At times the execution is almost meticulous in its minuteness, at other times as broad and summary as a late Velasquez. The smallest of his pictures will sometimes exhibit his characteristic strength of handling and greatness of style, but in his largest there is never any sense of

artificial inflation of size. The extensive canvas of the so-called 'Danaë' at St. Petersburg is as fully brushed in every part as the wonderful little 'Samuel and Hannah' in the Ellesmere Gallery.

In a word when Rembrandt sketches he is a draughtsman pure and simple; over the copper plate he is an engraver born and bred, while before his canvas his whole artistic nature seems to demand expression in paint and in paint alone.

It will be understood from this that with Rembrandt each mode of artistic expression was as a rule independent.

He did not draw mainly to make studies for etchings or pictures, nor was it his practice to use the engraved plate for the purpose of multiplying a design he had already painted. The relations between the sketch, the picture and the print were with him far looser than they were, for example, with Hogarth. Hogarth drew and painted and engraved the same subjects on about the same scale, and though he was a born painter who loved the brush for its own sake, yet in almost all his important pictures he had in view from the first a reproduction in black and white. In the case of Rembrandt, many of his drawings were no doubt trial pieces for compositions and effects, some of which were afterwards worked out on canvas or on the plate, while there are a fair number of instances of etchings and pictures of practically the same subjects. This was not however the rule, and the cases in which this occurs are probably those where Rembrandt in etching a subject has been struck with the idea of its effect in colour, or while painting it has translated it in fancy into light-and-shade. There is only

one instance in his work of a drawing an etching and a picture that are practically identical; the case is that of the 'Diana Bathing' of 1631, one of Rembrandt's earliest, and by no means one of his least successful, attempts at the female nude of classical type.

In dealing therefore with the drawings by Rembrandt, we are approaching a portion of his work that possesses substantial independence, and that gives us an idea of his aims and his power that no other part of his work will afford.

These drawings convey in a summary fashion Rembrandt's artistic ideas and immediate impressions of nature. A large number are rapid studies of figures and actions that came under his notice, both in his own house and abroad, or embodiments of some momentary fancy; and while many of them only give us his first ideas for subsequent compositions, others of them express thoughts that found no other outcome in his art. In the drawings we come particularly close to the artist, and we find in them a freshness and spontaneity of expression that is especially congenial to the artistic feeling of the present day. The technical quality of the drawings is as a rule of a high order, and in his own methods of work Rembrandt ranks with the greatest masters of draughtsmanship.

The number of Rembrandt drawings that would pass a fairly severe critical scrutiny used to be reckoned at about one thousand, but Dr. Hofstede de Groot, who has recently published an exhaustive catalogue of this part of the master's work,[1] has included rather more than sixteen

1 *Die Handzeichnungen Rembrandt's*, von C. Hofstede de Groot, Haarlem, 1906.

hundred examples, of which however a few are marked as not absolutely certain. Of these drawings, dispersed as they are among public and private collections, a selection, numbering about four hundred and forty, has been beautifully published in facsimile by F. Lippmann and C. Hofstede de Groot;[1] while the less elaborate publications of Klienmann and Co., of Haarlem,[2] and Schönbrunner-Meder, of Vienna[3], contribute about a hundred more. There are also many publications of single public and private collections of drawings, in each of which occur examples by Rembrandt. The cabinets of Paris, Munich, Dresden, Stockholm, and others are publishing in this way facsimiles of their treasures. In what follows references to Dr. Hofstede de Groot's *Catalogue* are given as 'de Groot' with the catalogue number of the drawing, while those reproduced in facsimile are given as 'Lippmann,' with the number of the series and the drawing within the series.

There are two of Rembrandt's drawings that possess a personal interest so exceptional that they may have a word at the outset. One is the delicate silver-point study at Berlin of his betrothed, Saskia van Ulenburch, authenticated and dated by an inscription in his own hand,[4] to which reference has already been made. Mr. J. P. Heseltine in London has another drawing[5] (Plate 14), that is from the personal point of view equally precious. It is a slight pen-

1 *Original Drawings by Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn*, reproduced in Phototype, Berlin and other places, 1888, etc.

2 *Handzeichnungen Alter Meister der Holländischen Schule.*

3 *Handzeichnungen Alter Meister aus der Albertina*, etc.

4 De Groot, 99; Lippmann, I, 6. See ante, p. 64.

5 De Groot, 994; Lippmann, I, 94.

drawing of the master by himself at full length, on which a later hand of the eighteenth century has written the words 'getekent door Rembrant van Rhijn naer syn selves soals hij in sijn schilderkamer gekleet was' ('drawn by Rembrant van Rhijn from himself as he was dressed in his studio'). The painter appears aged about fifty, and stands before us full face, a sturdy form, clad to near the ankles in an ample sort of blouse—the painting dress—girdled at the waist, and with loose sleeves that come down below the elbow. He wears a square-crowned hat of late Georgian shape, and this with his homely but resolute air makes him look very English. The features betoken firmness and character, but are not specially like Rembrandt's, as we know them in the other self-portraits.

The drawings are in various materials. Only one or two, including the 'Saskia,' are in silver-point on prepared vellum; the rest are on paper. Red chalk was a common material with Rembrandt, especially in the early part of his career, and he used too at the same epoch a soft black chalk for studies alike of figures, of animals, and of landscape. Rembrandt at times handles this beautiful material with a mastery that makes us wonder he did not employ it more commonly. He drew in this medium an elephant (Plate 17) in the British Museum,[1] in which the loose skin of the unwieldy creature and its clumsy legs are indicated with inimitable dexterity by the character of the strokes. Perhaps still finer is a drawing of the same beast in the Albertina Collection at Vienna,[2] in which the black chalk is manipulated in so masterly a fashion that there is

1 De Groot, 948; Lippmann, I, 118.
2 De Groot, 1469; Schönbrunner, III, 263.

probably no better example in existence of chalk drawing at its firmest and freest. There is extraordinary freedom in the strokes, which run in every direction, straight or curved, but always with a definitely conceived relation to the form and character of the part indicated. Of especial value are the strong touches of intense black which enliven the whole design in the most spirited fashion. The qualities of this masterpiece of technique are quite different from those of the other black-chalk elephant in the British Museum, which is more careful and perhaps zoologically truer. It certainly took longer to execute. The contrast between the two is instructive as showing the range of the artist's powers in the manipulation of a soft point that crumbles on the mordant and retentive surface of the paper. The artist seems to have been pleased with the Vienna elephant, for he has signed and dated it 'Rembrandt ft. 1637.'

The vast majority of the pieces are pen-drawings, mostly in brown ink,[1] often shaded with the brush, or even with the finger. They vary in character from a few hasty scratches to an elaborately finished study in light-and-shade, like the 'Boy Reading' of the Louvre collection,[2] and are of all subjects and all periods of the master's activity. These pen-and-wash drawings, when carried reasonably far, have something of the effect of the plates of Turner's 'Liber Studiorum,' where the etched line is used to accent the mezzotint shadow. In Earl Brownlow's collection there is a fine study of a lion couchant,[3] in

1 Dr. de Groot thinks that this ink was merely the ordinary writing ink of the time, and not 'bistre' or 'sepia.' *Catalogue*, p. xli.

2 De Groot, 627 ; Lippmann, I, 161 b.

3 De Groot, 826 ; Lippmann, 150 b.

PLATE 17.—AN ELEPHANT. DRAWING IN BLACK CHALK

British Museum

To face p. 116

which the features, with some of the locks of the mane, are touched in strongly with the pen, the rest of the form being softly shaded with a wash.

The pen used is sometimes a very soft and broad reed pen which almost produces the effect of a brush. A study in the Six collection, Amsterdam,[1] of a man in face and costume bearing a resemblance to the famous portrait in oil of Jan Six in the same collection, is executed almost entirely with a pen of this kind, the strokes very broad and soft, but ending sharp and square. In some other drawings the pen has been used with a light and delicate touch that gives an effect as refined as a silver-point, and in this medium Rembrandt's power of giving expression to the human features finds fullest scope. A sheet in the Print Room of the British Museum with three studies of a lame beggar[2] is a good example (Plate 3). The face and the hand of the most finished of the three figures are most delicately rendered. A slight study in fine lines for the subject of Isaac blessing Jacob in the presence of Rebecca, at Chatsworth,[3] is inimitable for the expressiveness of the touches. The hands of the old man, one of which is raised to bless, and the face of Rebecca, who is grinning with glee at the success of her plot, are given with a touch or two in deftest fashion. Another study, at Amsterdam, of the family of Jacob, when Judah is asking leave to take Benjamin to Egypt,[4] is equally delicate in delineation and happy in the rendering of contrasted expressions.

1 De Groot, 1236; Lippmann, II, 5.
2 De Groot, 919; Lippmann, I, 111.
3 De Groot, 829; Lippmann, I, 76.
4 De Groot, 1160; Lippmann, II, 70.

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A certain number of Rembrandt drawings are carried very far, in various superimposed media, as when pen and chalk are washed over in different tints with the brush. A large composition of 'Christ and the Disciples' in the Teyler Museum, Haarlem, signed and dated 'Rembrandt f. 1634,'[1] is drawn in partly with the pen and partly with chalk. The light portions are then tinted with washes of red and pale yellow with white high-lights, and the shadows with bistre or umber. The effect is that of a pastel drawing. Washes of sepia and Indian ink cover outlines in red chalk of a fine composition of the 'Deposition', in the British Museum.[2] Another drawing of the above year, 1634, in the Holford collection,[3] is a finished study for a male portrait, the oil painting of which, if ever executed, does not seem to have survived. The subject is seated in an armchair with his hat in his hand, and the work is in red and black chalk, lightly treated against an almost white background. There is a boldly drawn architectural frame tinted with the brush.

These more elaborate studies have a somewhat laboured appearance, and do not give us the artistic pleasure of the simpler drawings in a single material. Nothing can ever equal in this form of art the charm of the study in which the artist has thrown upon the paper, with a few direct touches, his momentary impression of something in nature that had arrested his alert glance, or one of those glimpses of the unseen world of the imagination that 'flash upon the inward eye' of the creative artist.

1 De Groot, 1319; Lippmann, I, 165.

2 De Groot, 890; Lippmann, I, 103. The artist has taken such pains with the composition that he has cut the drawing about till it is now made up of 16 pieces.

3 De Groot, 1063; Lippmann I, 127.

Concerning the authenticity and dates of these drawings we are in a less advantageous position than in the case of the pictures and etchings, for it is only in very rare instances that the drawings are signed or dated. A large number of unsigned drawings however are attested by the fact that they are studies of figures or heads or compositions recognizable in the etched or painted work of the master. The dated or datable drawings belong to all the successive decades of Rembrandt's artistic life, from 1630 to 1660, so that this form of activity can be proved to cover in point of time the whole of his career.[1]

Some classes of drawings are sparingly if at all represented in Rembrandt's work in other materials, but are brought into the *œuvre* through their intrinsic quality or through some external attestation. Studies of animals, for example, figure largely among the drawings, while though animals occur in the pictures and etchings, and are sometimes the very beasts for which the drawings are studies, they do not take a prominent place in the pictures or etchings, such a place for example as animals hold in the painted work of Rubens. There are four fine drawings of elephants, but the only elephant in more finished technique is that in the background of the 'Adam and Eve' etching, B. 28, and here the animal is not a success. The lion in the early etching of 'St. Jerome,' B. 100, is a beast of heraldry with the starved hindquarters characteristic of that particular breed. In B. 101, 103, the lions are no better, though B. 102 is more kingly, while the later

1 The criteria of authenticity and date are discussed in the Introduction to Dr. Hofstede de Groot's Catalogue, pp. ix.–xxxvii.

unfinished 'St. Jerome,' B. 104, has a noble lion, but the lions of the 'Lion Hunts' of 1641, B. 114, 115, 116, are failures. The latter are in violent action, and this did not suit Rembrandt's genius so well as it suited that of the Flemings, Rubens and Snyders, by whose work Rembrandt has evidently been inspired. No one would have derived from these lions in the etchings any idea that Rembrandt was one of the finest delineators of lions that ever lived. He may have had opportunities of studying the creatures from life in a menagerie that Vosmaer says was in Amsterdam about 1640. He has, at any rate, taken the animal in captivity and shows it sleeping, eating its dinner, drinking out of a pail, and sometimes bound with ropes or a chain. The finest of these studies, which number in all more than forty, omit any such *genre* motive, and exhibit the creature in magnificent repose. The drawings are in bistre or sepia reinforced by the pen, and give the natural colour very happily. There is a fine feeling in them of anatomical structure, and the impression of latent power is superbly rendered. The British Museum has many good examples.

An instance in which these fine studies are utilized for a formal composition we find in a drawing for 'Daniel in the Lions' Den' in the collection of Dr. Hofstede de Groot.[1] This is one of the numerous drawings that make us wish we had had the selection of the designs which Rembrandt was to work out into pictures. It would have exactly suited his genius, and Rembrandtesque effects of light-and-shade would have been easily obtainable at the bottom of the circular pit, with arched recesses in the

[1] De Groot, 1262; Lippmann, III, 46.

sides of it, in which Daniel is in comfortable intercourse with his feline companions. Daniel, a graceful long-haired youth, kneels in the foreground, with hands brought together in the attitude of prayer. At his back is a standing lion that is rubbing its head against the shoulder of the comely stripling in the friendliest fashion. A lion with a finely drawn head, like some in the studies, is couchant on the right, while a creature who is standing more in the background thinks it incumbent on him to show his teeth in a snarl, lest the conclave should seem too peaceful. It is to be regretted that Rembrandt never painted out this or any other lion piece, for which the effective studies gave him ample material.

Among domestic beasts, the drawings show that Rembrandt was especially attracted by swine. M. Léon Bonnat possesses two excellent drawings of these animals,[1] into the character of which, on its humorous side, Rembrandt has entered, while the drawing of the snouts and feet and the bristly texture of the integument have received full justice. Here however we find the studies from nature utilized for a superb etching, B. 151, of 1643. (See Plate 4.)

The animals chiefly to be met with in the pictures and etched compositions are those of a domestic kind. The horse, the ass, the dog, the cat, frequently appear, and a parrot or a singing-bird, in a cage suspended out of the way of the cat, is not uncommon. Sometimes the introduction of the animal is conditioned by the subject, as is the case with the horse of the Good Samaritan, and the ass which carries Mary and the Child into Egypt. At

1 De Groot, 748, 749 ; Lippmann, I, 180 b, III, 25.

other times the animal is an accessory, useful for composition or for giving a homelike feeling to an interior.

It is noteworthy that we do not find studies for this domestic fauna among the drawings. These were, perhaps, too much a matter of course, and did not attract the artist's glance, whereas the animals specially represented among the drawings are outland creatures that had struck him as something new and strange.

These studies of imported animals are accordingly a genuine element in the master's *œuvre*, though practically only represented among the drawings. There is a second class of drawings that stands apart, and gives us another Rembrandt than the one we are so familiar with from the pictures. The etched work however contains studies of the same kind, and this fact helps to attest the drawings in question as a characteristic part of the artist's work. The reference is to a long series of simple unaffected studies from nature, in those homely aspects in which nature is presented in the rural districts of Holland. Of the landscapes among the etchings, B. 206—B. 256,[1] about a score are of this same character, and many of these are dated between 1632 and 1652, so that they cover a considerable part of the artist's career.

The general idea that most people have formed of a Rembrandt landscape is that of a study in light-and-shade treated with power and with a suggestion of poetic feeling, but without any elaborate delineation of the details of natural objects. It is landscapes of this kind, of which the famous etching the 'Three Trees,' or Lord Lans-

[1] Nearly half of these are not genuine. See the *Verzeichniss* of von Seidlitz.

downe's 'Mill at Sunset' are well-known examples, that Bode had in his mind when he claimed for Rembrandt that he was the creator of the landscape of feeling.[1]

It is a mistake however to suppose that Rembrandt habitually regarded nature with the eyes of a tragedian, or was constantly on the look-out for pronounced effects of light-and-shade. Besides the etchings just mentioned there is a very large number of drawings of the simple and unpretentious kind here referred to, in which there is little or no effect of chiaroscuro or appeal to the emotions, but only evidence of an unaffected delight in nature in her every-day aspects, and in the homely picturesque of the old cottage or bridge or windmill, or the church tower a mile away across the level fields.

There is an especially interesting collection of these studies in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, in the form of a sketch-book that belonged to a son of the painter Govert Flinck, who was a pupil of Rembrandt. The pedigree of the drawings is thus assured, and they may be taken as representative of their class. The simplest are studies of trees, bordering a road, or in clumps amidst the level expanse of the fields. The masses of the foliage are indicated with the pen in the conventional wavy curves, and an accent is laid here and there on branch or stem. On the gnarled trunks of patriarchal willow trees Rembrandt dwells with great delight, and in this respect a drawing in M. Bonnat' collection[2] is finer than anything at Chatsworth. The artist here fastens with quite Turnerian *empressement* on the anatomy of the curved and hollow stem, and contrasts

1 *Studien*, 488 f. 2 De Groot, 769; Lippmann, III, 18.

with these knots and furrows of age the elastic upspring of the few slender shoots that can still draw up the sap through the almost ossified veins. The beautiful etching with the view of Omval, B. 209, Plate B., contains a finely executed tree of the kind.

In another class of the Chatsworth landscapes, buildings are the prominent features. These are sometimes old town gates, for which Rembrandt had always an eye, and of which he has given us a most characteristic study in pen and wash in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem,[1] which is one of his finest efforts of the kind. In most cases however the structures are country cottages, with barns and other outbuildings, and the artist has delighted in their quaint irregularities. A particularly bold pen drawing shows us two cottages side by side with heavily thatched roofs overgrown with weeds.[2] Windmills introduce a variety, and Rembrandt as a miller's son does full justice to them.

The most beautiful Flinck drawings are those in which water plays a part in the effect. There is at times a lovely quality in these, such as we obtain in a fine Whistler etching of Venice and her lagoons. On a piece of still water there sleep the shadows of windmills and cottages upon a little spit of dry land amidst the marshes. Elsewhere, a bank fringed with rushes curves away into the distance whence there floats statelily towards us a barge with tall mast and single sail; or a broad expanse of rippling lagoon dotted with sails carries the eye across to the opposite marge, where a village nestles among trees around the church whose spire is the focus of the composi-

1 De Groot, 1334; Lippmann, II, 8.
2 De Groot, 852; Lippmann, I, 65.

tion ; or, again, the sweeping curves of river banks lead the glance into the distance, the receding planes of which are marked by the diminishing hulls and sails of the boats. It is a land of quiet scenes that invite to reverie. The cattle chewing the cud upon the rich pastures are not more peaceful than are the farmer and the fisherman that are plying their familiar tasks on land or water, and Rembrandt has been satisfied to enter with full sympathy into the spirit of the life about him, and to lose for the moment his own pronounced individuality as artist, in these sincere and simple renderings of homely fact.

One slight and tiny study of great beauty in the collection of Mr. Heseltine must have a special word. It is a view of Haarlem from the dunes, with a foreground very like that in the monumental pictures of the same scene by Ruysdael at The Hague and at Amsterdam. Perhaps it is the remembrance of these pictures, in which the national landscape painting of Holland may be said to have touched its zenith, that gives to the little Rembrandt sketch its peculiar charm ; but no one who has ever seen it will forget its beautiful suggestion of the city in the plain, wherein 'the very houses seem asleep,' and town and fields alike are lapped in majestic repose.[1]

A word may be given here to a curious class of Rembrandt's drawings which consist in free copies from miniatures executed by Indian artists for the Mogul Emperors. They appear in various collections, and there are good specimens in the British Museum. We know that in 1642 Rembrandt painted the portrait of a director of the Dutch East India Company, and he may have acquired the book

1 De Groot, 1038 ; Lippmann, II, 30 a.

in which were the originals as a consequence of this. The book may be one mentioned in Rembrandt's Inventory as 'Een dito (boeck) vol curieuse minijateur,'[1] and it has been conjectured that he may have executed these copies, which are in pen and wash and water colour, before the forced sale in 1656 when he knew he would be parted from the volume.

So far our concern has been with classes of subjects that on the whole are more completely represented among the drawings than among the etchings or pictures. The most important class of Rembrandt drawings however are those which are closely connected with the etchings and pictures through the fact that they deal with the same or similar themes. The reference is to the studies for portraits, and the compositions of figures from classical or sacred story.

The studies for likenesses are on the whole of comparatively little importance, when compared with the stupendous achievement of the painted portraits. One elaborate likeness which does not seem to have found its way into paint has been already noticed. There are drawings for the following amongst other well-known painted or etched portraits. There is a finished but somewhat heavy study in red chalk in the British Museum for the etching of the Mennonite preacher Anslo, B. 271. The drawing is signed and dated 1640.[2] Baron Edmond de Rothschild at Paris has a finished and very beautifully executed pen-and-brush drawing from this same Anslo[3] for the large picture at Berlin, given on Plate 6, where he is shown as in edifying discourse with a female member of his flock. In the British

1 *Urkunden*, p. 200. 2 De Groot, 896; Lippmann, I, 120.
3 De Groot, 816; Lippmann, III, 17.

Museum collection there is a very hasty pen-study for the 'Silvius' of 1646.[1] A brilliantly executed pen study, which probably preceded the great portrait of Jan Six of c. 1654, has been already referred to (ante p. 117). A study, for the equally notable etching of Jan Six at the window, of 1647, B. 285, is in the Six collection at Amsterdam.[2] A dog which does not appear in the etching, is jumping up to him. There are also several obvious studies for portraits of which the originals are unknown.

In the case of the 'Corporation' pictures we are especially fortunate in possessing a small sketch of the complete composition of Dr. Deyman's 'Anatomy Lesson,'[3] the picture of which has come down to us in a very mutilated condition. The same good hap has preserved in some slight studies in the print room at Munich the composition of the great decorative painting representing the 'Conjuration of Civilis' of which only the central portion survives in the Gallery at Stockholm. Many of the known drawings that Rembrandt executed from the members of his family and from near friends have been already referred to in chaps. iv. and v.

The compositions from classical or sacred story, which figure largely among the extant drawings, are in some cases studies for actually existing pictures or etchings, and when this is the case the drawing is both authenticated and dated. In the majority of instances however they are suggestions, which, so far as we know, were never carried out in the more elaborate and permanent forms.

1 De Groot, 898 ; Lippmann, I, 121.
2 De Groot, 1235 ; Lippmann, II, 53.
3 De Groot, 1238 ; Lippmann, II. 56.

These have, of course, to be dealt with on their merits, and a goodly number that pass in collections under Rembrandt's name lack the unmistakable impress of the master's genius. In the case however of a very considerable body of work no doubt is possible. In the content of the compositions we recognize the product of Rembrandt's creative imagination, in the expressive line the touch of his hand. It may seem very high praise, but it is only the truth, so say that a really characteristic figure drawing by Rembrandt surpasses anything of the kind by any other artist. Dürer and Holbein are still archaic, while the great Italians, though they have an unequalled sense of beauty and knowledge of the human form, always in their compositions give the impression of conscious 'make up.' Rembrandt has more variety, more directness, a more intimate truth, and we can generally tell his drawings because no one else could do the same kind of thing so well.

Many drawings of the kind in question are of especial value because they offer to us combinations and suggestions of effect that surpass in feeling and in beauty the mass of finished productions that has come down to us. It is true that the finest work that Rembrandt has presented to the world in finished form shows us the master as in every way at his best. Such pieces as the Louvre 'Supper at Emmaus,' the 'Jacob blessing the Children of Joseph' at Cassel, the 'Christ and Mary Magdalen' at Brunswick, the 'Return of the Prodigal' at St. Petersburg exhibit, as subject pictures, at their very height the master's great qualities of truth, imagination, and feeling. He is not always however in these respects equal to himself, and many of the drawings show the qualities just mentioned

at a higher level than the less successful of his pictures or etchings. Hence there may be repeated here the pious wish, to which utterance has already been given, that we had had some voice in the selection of the compositions that were to be worked out in black-and-white or colour. It is worthy of note that Roger de Piles, in his '*Vie des Peintres avec des Reflections sur leurs Ouvrages*,' published in 1699, remarks on the special interest of Rembrandt's drawings, 'he has drawn an infinity of thoughts that have not less of salt and of point than the productions of the greatest painters. The great number of his drawings which I have in my own hands is a convincing proof of this.' He thinks that the etchings are not designed with the same spirit as the sketches.

A few examples may here be referred to. We may divide them into two classes, putting on one side the drawings which seem to offer specially good schemes of composition or opportunities for gaining by natural means Rembrandt-like effects of light-and-shade; and on the other side scenes and motives that would have given the artist scope for the exercise of his special gift of bringing out in moving fashion the profounder human interest of the great situations presented in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, there is a fine composition of 'Christ giving Sight to a Blind Man.'[1] A 'Christ and Peter on the Sea,' in the possession of Mr. George Salting,[2] shows us the two principal figures in front with the ship behind, the sweeping lines of which contrast admirably with the upright contours of the protagonists.

1 De Groot, 1351; Kleinmann, VI, 6.
2 De Groot, 1120; Lippmann, III, 71.

The disciples are massed in the stern to the left, and the prow rises effectively behind the figure of Christ to the right hand of the composition. A 'Raising of Jairus' Daughter,' in Berlin, from Sir Seymour Haden's collection,[1] presents the girl reclining in graceful pose on the bed in the foreground, while Christ, an isolated figure of much quiet dignity, stands on the other side of it, with lifted right hand. The bystanders compose in a half-circle to the right. The noble Chatsworth drawing 'Christ Crowned with Thorns,'[2] reproduced on Plate 19, might have been worked out to one of the most monumental of the artist's compositions. In a building that opens through a wide and lofty archway to a palace court, are assembled the soldiers of the Pretorian band, with sundry spectators from among the Jewish dignitaries. The figure of Christ is seated to the left on a sort of throne, on the steps of which, and behind it, are gathered the soldiers, who scowl and mock and smite the bowed form that with tragic patience holds and wears the sceptre and diadem. A figure that kneels with back to the spectator in the corner of the left foreground serves as an effective *repoussoir*, while the main group to the left is balanced to the right of the central opening by the characteristic standing figure in oriental dress and turban *vu de dos*, with which Rembrandt's other compositions make us so familiar. Another Jew, in profile, stands beside him. The two groups are connected by figures half seen that are ascending the steps from the court to the central opening. We have here all the elements of

1 De Groot, 57 ; Lippmann, I, 146.
2 De Groot, 831 ; Lippmann, I, 52.

PLATE 19. CHRIST MOCKED BY THE SOLDIERS. DRAWING
Chatsworth Collection

To face p. 130

orthodox composition, as it was understood in the Italian schools, but they are put together in easy unconcerned fashion, so that the natural look which is present in the best compositions of the master is in no danger of being lost. The drawing can be approximately dated from the fact that the two figures on the right occur again in the picture in the National Gallery of the 'Woman Taken in Adultery,' which belongs to the year 1644.

A subject that seems to have had a fascination for Rembrandt is that of the Last Supper. There are two or three studies from his own hand after the Last Supper of Lionardo da Vinci, which he would know from engravings. One, at Dresden, is fairly correct,[1] though he has added a huge canopy over the head of the principal figure and suppressed the window. Another,[2] at Berlin, is evidently sketched from memory, and shows some curious mistakes. Rembrandt's own experiments in the theme were apparently not influenced by this classic masterpiece. One drawing in the Louvre[3] shows an attempt at that archaeological accuracy for which he was praised by a contemporary poet.[4] The table is square, and couches run all round it, on which the figures are partly seated and partly recline. Another version is in the Print Room at Berlin,[5] and here the subject is treated in a familiar homely fashion very characteristic of the master. The interest of this design is human rather than purely artistic, and we may use it as a transition piece between works important

1 De Groot, 297 ; Lippmann, I, 99.
2 De Groot, 65 ; Lippmann, I, 24.
3 De Groot, 608 ; Lippmann, III, 66.
4 *Urkunden*, no. 91. 5 De Groot, 55; Lippmann, I, 200.

mainly as compositions, and those in which the interest of the theme is paramount.

In the drawing in question there is little merit of arrangement, but the general atmosphere, in a spiritual sense, of the scene is effectively suggested, while the contrasted types and expressions of those present are given in Rembrandt's most thoughtful and sympathetic manner. Christ is seated facing the spectator on the further side of a small table, at or beside which are sitting three of the disciples, the others standing behind on each side of the principal figure. With right hand raised Christ has just uttered the momentous words, 'One of you shall betray me,' and without any expressive action of hands or body the disciples convey their profound concern. This is not the place to deal with Rembrandt's conception and rendering of biblical themes in general, but it will be seen later on (postea, p. 278 f.) that his treatment is happily placed in the mean between the ecclesiastic conventions of the Italian schools and schools derived therefrom, and the aggressively naturalistic rendering favoured by some earnest modern painters such as Fritz von Uhde. Rembrandt knew how to give elevation of type as well as convincing homely truth. We see this in some pen-studies of 'Christ Washing Peter's Feet,' which are of the same character as the study just mentioned. One is in the Louvre,[1] another in the Print Room at Amsterdam.[2] Here the psychological situation is a complex one. In the Louvre drawing Christ kneels in front of Peter, who draws back in his chair, tucks his legs away under him,

1 De Groot, 607 ; Lippmann, III, 9.
2 De Groot, 1173; Lippmann, II, 21.

and crosses his hands with a deprecating gesture over his breast. In the Amsterdam version, Peter has yielded and the action proceeds, but he leans forward in his chair with his hands on the arms of it, anxious and timid. The disciples in both compositions are grouped around, and their faces, with varying expressions, are a commentary on the moving but evidently somewhat puzzling situation.

In the matter of psychological interest, the Old Testament scene, where the youthful Joseph is relating his dream to his father and Leah and the assembled brethren, offers that variety in intellectual expressions of which Rembrandt was always ready to take full advantage. In a drawing,[1] in which a delicate and suggestive pen-line is reinforced with some light washes, we see Joseph standing apart on the right speaking with animation to those before him. The action of the left hand enforces his words. In the centre of the composition, Jacob, with the little Benjamin between his knees, a delightful study, looks intently towards his favourite son, and a woman, Leah no doubt, peers over his shoulder. Dr. A. Bredius has a study for these three figures, but without the little Benjamin, who is a most effective addition. Further back are the brethren, who differ in age, characteristics, and costume, and by their gestures and expressions bring out the meaning of the whole story. There is the same quality of work in their lightly touched lineaments as in the justly praised group of bystanders on the left hand of the '100 Florin Plate.' One of the brethren, for example, holds a shepherd's staff in his hand, and leans his head forward intently listening. He has a high forehead and

1 Six Collection, Amsterdam; De Groot, 1231; Lippmann, II. 7.

intellectual cast of features. Next him is a broad burly personage in a wide-brimmed hat with one hand on hip, who turns to a brother that grasps his shoulder from behind, and gazes over it anxiously, and, it appears, with somewhat sinister intent. The personage with the hat is evidently reassuring him, and makes light of the situation. There is an etching of the same subject, B. 37, but it is as a design far inferior to the drawing. The pretty motive of the child between the old patriarch's knees (l'art d'être grandpère) occurs, not in B. 37, but in another etching, B. 33.

A very telling subject for the master's special treatment forms the subject of a pen-sketch in the Bibliothèque Nationale representing the family of Lot conducted by an angel from Sodom.[1] There are Lot, his old mother, whom the angel is helping along, and various other figures, with, on the extreme right, the wife, whose fatal attraction for the things of the house is indicated by her carrying a big tray of domestic objects. A dog, often introduced by Rembrandt into family pieces and interiors, is trotting in front.

A 'Christ with Martha and Mary,' in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem,[2] might have been worked out with Rembrandt's own effects of light and shade in an interior, and nice adjustments of delineation of character. Christ is seated in converse with the contemplative Mary, and Martha enters on the left. She has first put down her household basket on the table, and stands in short skirt

1 De Groot, 584 ; Lippmann, I, 160.

2 Lippmann, I, 170. Dr. de Groot, 1320, marks it as 'nicht ganz zweifellos.'

and apron, with her back to the spectator, an inimitable figure, replete with self-righteous protest.

A telling contrast to the subject of the 'Return of the Prodigal Son,' which Rembrandt treated in one of his most expressive pictures, at St. Petersburg, would have been afforded by that of the 'Farewell of the Prodigal,' for which there is a large drawing in the Print Room at Berlin.[1] The scene is an open courtyard bustling with life. The youthful scapegrace is in the act of mounting a spirited steed, better drawn than is sometimes the case with Rembrandt's horses, while the father stands by in dignified sorrow. Bystanders, and figures looking from the windows, complete a lively composition.

No object would be gained by multiplying examples of this kind, but due account must be taken of them in any estimate of Rembrandt's work. They show his great imaginative activity, which his completed pictures only represent in part, and they enable us to form some mental image of Rembrandt pictures with even higher qualities of design than those actually brought to perfection. There is, we repeat, at times a grace, an elasticity, about the figures which Rembrandt sketched so deftly with the pen, that we miss in the massively painted forms upon his canvases.

The drawings of subjects that were actually carried out in etchings or pictures form another class, and one that is of course of the highest interest. There are drawings for the etching of 'St. Jerome,' B. 104;[2]

1 De Groot, 60; Lippmann, II, 37. There is another representation of the same subject at Dresden.

2 In the Kunsthalle, Hamburg; de Groot, 345; Lippmann, I 133.

for the picture of the 'Vision of Daniel,' at Berlin;[1] for the 'Sacrifice of Isaac,' at St. Petersburg,[2] and for other compositions, that are to all intents and purposes exactly reproduced in the finished works, while there are many cases like that of the finely executed drawing of the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' in the Heseltine collection,[3] that is reproduced in the 'Nativity,' of 1646, in the National Gallery with alterations that are not really significant. Very often however there do exist significant variations between drawing and picture or etching, and in this way we can watch the development of Rembrandt's artistic idea. Bode goes too far when he says that 'it was Rembrandt's habit to work out his ideas on paper again and again, from their inception until such time as he had produced a definitive pictorial effect. As a result of this method we still possess nearly a thousand drawings by his hand, whereas his sketches in oil are very rare.'[4] This seems to imply a deliberate procedure on the part of Rembrandt that was foreign to his usual habits of work. This is the way in which Raphael gradually built up the composition of his 'Entombment' in the Borghese Gallery, but it is not the way of the more passionate, more impressionist, master of Holland. Still there are plenty of instances in which we can trace through drawings the progressive improvement of a design. An example in which an action is simplified and interest concentrated in the more mature version of a theme is furnished by the group of the 'Reconciliation of David with Absalom' at St.

1 Bonnet Collection; de Groot, 677; Lippmann, I, 176.
2 Stockholm; de Groot, 1543.
3 De Groot, 988.
4 *Complete Work*, II, p. 17.

Petersburg, for which there is a drawing.[1] In the latter the two figures are side by side, and Absalom seems bending as if to kiss his father's hand, while David has his right hand on his shoulder. In the picture of 1642, the son has flung himself in an ecstasy of remorse on his father's breast and the two figures seem almost one, as David clasps both arms around the repentant youth.

Another good example of a significant alteration, which adds greatly to the imaginative effect of a composition, is to be found if we compare the well-known picture in the Buckingham Palace collection, representing the appearance of Christ as gardener to Mary Magdalen, with the sketch for the same subject belonging to M. Hofstede de Groot.[2] In the picture Christ has come behind Mary and her attention is suddenly directed to Him. She turns and looks up at Him astonished while He bends over her, a dark figure against the rising light of dawn. The drawing is much tamer. Christ, with the broad brimmed hat He wears in the picture, stands leaning in a negligent attitude on a pilaster at the end of a wall, with one leg crossed over the other. Mary kneels at a little distance in a rather studied pose and looks up at Him with clasped hands. There is no movement here, no concentration of interest, no intensity. Even apart from its magical effect of light and shade the picture is far finer as a composition.

The same improvement on a previous study is observable in the noble picture of 'Manoah and his Wife at the Departure of the Angel,' at Dresden (1641). (See Plate 20.) Here the figure of the wife, who kneels straight

1 De Groot, 1257 ; Lippmann, III, 42.
2 De Groot, 1275 ; Lippmann, II, 99.

upright with hands clasped, is one of the most feeling and beautiful in the whole work of the painter, but in a study in Paris[1] she is weakly bending. Manoah in the drawing is turning away from her, but in the picture he bends towards her and the group is at once made a unity.

Hitherto the compositions noticed have all been of a religious kind, and as is well known these preponderate enormously in the master's *œuvre*. There are however many drawings from those classical motives that Rembrandt occasionally affected at all the periods of his career. For example the British Museum collection contains a drawing in black chalk for the early picture and etching (B. 201) of 'Diana bathing,' one of Rembrandt's first studies from the nude. A classical picture of late date, 1658, represents the homely scene, one congenial to Rembrandt's taste, of Philemon and Baucis entertaining their two Olympian guests. A drawing for the picture is in the Print Room at Amsterdam.[2] The 'Ganymede' at Dresden, of 1635, has its sketch preserved in the same collection.[3]

A large composition of Mercury and Argus, in a private collection at Paris,[4] was apparently never carried out; and this was also the case with a sketch (accepted by de Groot but surely of doubtful authenticity) of Vulcan exhibiting to the assembled gods and goddesses his amorous captives in the net.[5] There is also a study of 'Jupiter and Antiope,'[6] that is of some interest in connection with the

1 De Groot, 791; Lippmann, III, 29.
2 De Groot, 1178; Lippmann, II, 24.
3 De Groot, 241, Lippmann, I, 136.
4 De Groot, 781; Lippmann, III, 55.
5 De Groot, 1219; Lippmann, III, 82.
6 De Groot, 780; Lippmann, III, 53.

PLATE 20.—MANOAH AND HIS WIFE

From the picture "The Sacrifice of Manoah," Dresden

To face p. 138

etching of the same subject, B. 203, of 1659. B. 203 is closely studied from Correggio's famous picture, now in the Louvre, but the drawing is quite different. Antiope, a not too ungraceful nude, is lying on her side, and the goat-footed deity is stealing roguishly up from behind. The large drawing of 'Diana and Actaeon' at Dresden[1] is not at all like the early picture with small figures, at Anholt, of 1635. 'Pyramus and Thisbe' which occurs more than once among the drawings, was apparently never painted out.

Apart from the portraits, the landscapes, and the figure compositions, there are other classes of Rembrandt drawings that must have a word. In Rembrandt's work throughout, genre subjects, i.e., scenes from ordinary life in the style of Metsu or Jan Steen, hardly occur, and compositions which seem at first sight to present this appearance are in very many cases on religious themes, though treated in homely fashion. In his Catalogue of Rembrandt drawings Dr. Hofstede de Groot includes twenty-seven pieces under the head 'Genrescenen.' One example is a group, of which there is more than one sketch, as well as a well-known etching, consisting in some children clustered round a pancake woman. From our present point of view this may rather go under the head of 'child studies,' which will presently be mentioned. On 'genre' pieces in Rembrandt's *œuvre*, see postea, p. 207.

Studies of single figures from ordinary life are on the other hand sufficiently abundant, both among the etchings and the drawings, and often take the form of sketches of picturesque beggars, of which there are many at Berlin,

1 De Groot, 240; Lippmann, I, 98.

the British Museum, and elsewhere. Most of these studies of beggars seem early, and of the Leyden period. It has been pointed out that, in mediaeval days, Leyden, owing to its numerous monastic foundations, must have been a place of great attractiveness to the members of this fraternity. Beggars in any case would be sufficiently numerous in Rembrandt's early days, for these coincided with the twelve years truce with Spain, when invalided soldiers, and camp-followers with their occupation gone, must have been numerous up and down the country. In Amsterdam, on the other hand, the picturesque figures of Jews in semi-oriental garb were much in evidence, and there is a fine study of these in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem.[1] The studies of beggars were used for the groups of the sick and maimed in the '100 Florin Plate,' and there is a drawing for one of these groups in the Berlin Print Room.[2] The studies of Jews appear in pictures and etchings from the life of Christ, and in the 'Synagogue' etching, B. 126.

Quite a considerable class of Rembrandt's studies have children for their subject, and there can be no doubt that he often found his models for these in his own nursery. They begin to appear in his work about 1635 not long after the birth of his first-born, the boy Rumbartus. The child seems to have died about 1641, but between these dates he appears several times both as a separate study and in compositions. He was a broad-faced sturdy-looking child with a large head set low down on the shoulders. We find his portrait at Stockholm in a pen-

1 De Groot, 1324; Lippmann, III, 81.
2 De Groot, 56; Lippmann, I, 3.

drawing[1] and the same face appears in the etching, B. 310. Valentiner thinks he served as model for the little Benjamin between his father's knees in the drawing already referred to;[2] for the boy who looks on at the Return of the Prodigal;[3] and for sundry versions of the story of Hagar and Ishmael. One of these, in which the latter is seen laid out fainting in the desert,[4] may have been studied from the child after his death. It will be remembered that Saskia had several children, all of whom save only Titus died quite young.

The numerous drawings in which a mother or nurse is seen with a child in her arms, or leading a child, or teaching it to walk, are no doubt studied from domestic models. The cabinet at Stockholm, enriched as it was by the acquisition of the fine Crozat collection, is especially well furnished with these 'nursery studies' as they have been called. Lippmann and Hofstede de Groot have reproduced many of these from the Swedish and other collections. The British Museum has a charming pen and wash drawing of a mother with a child in her arms.[5] A porringer with a spoon in it lies beside her on the window sill. A nurse helping a baby along by leading strings is at Stockholm.[6] The Albertina Gallery at Vienna has a charming piece of the same kind.[7] The drawings at Stockholm and Amsterdam reproduced by Lippmann and Hofstede de Groot I, 131; II, 17, 83, 84, are other examples. Mr. Heseltine has a study of a young woman

1 De Groot, 1592; Lippmann, II, 10. 2 Ante, p. 133.
3 Postea, p. 291. 4 De Groot, 360; Lippmann, I, 100.
5 De Groot, 877; Lippmann, I, 114. It is called generally a 'Holy Family.' 6 De Groot, 1597; Lippmann, I, 130.
7 De Groot, 1454; Schönbrunner, No. 859.

with a baby in her arms and one foot on the lower step of a flight of stairs. Another drawing in his collection seems to give us a glimpse into the *vie intime* of Rembrandt's household. It is a sheet with sketches on both sides. On the one there is a nurse and a child, and on the other a young woman (Saskia) is lying in bed and there appears also on the same sheet a male head easily to be recognized as that of Ephraim Bonus, the Jew physician, the subject of one of Rembrandt's finest etchings, B. 278. A delightful little study of a sleeping baby in a cradle has passed from the collection of Sir Frederick Leighton to that of Mr. Heseltine.[1] It is a study for the child in the Holy Family at St. Petersburg of 1645, wherein, it has been suggested, Hendrickje Stoffels, then a girl of about 18, may have sat for the youthful mother (see Plate 9 b and Plate 12). One 'nursery study' at Berlin[2] is of special interest. It shows a young woman wrestling with an excessively fractious child who has thrown off one of his shoes and is kicking and screaming with all his force. A nurse who stands by is using to the child the usual futile exhortations. Rembrandt has seized in happiest fashion the expression on the convulsed features of the urchin, and has proceeded to utilize the motive for a study for the 'Ganymede Carried off by the Eagle,'[3] which was finally worked out in the Dresden picture. The face and the chubby figure of the Ganymede are evidently taken from the screaming child of the Berlin drawing. Valentiner thinks it is Rumbartus, but in the Berlin drawing there

1 De Groot, 1012 ; Lippmann, I, 188 b.

2 De Groot, 140 ; Lippmann, I, 9. M. de Groot says that there is a better version of the subject at Budapest.

3 Ante, p. 138.

are two other children looking on, and as Rumbartus was the first-born it is difficult to see how they could come into the scene. Moreover the picture is dated 1635 and Rumbartus was not baptized till December 15 of that year.[1] There is a study of a man, evidently a widower, feeding a baby with a spoon in the Heseltine collection,[2] which some would like to bring into personal connection with Rembrandt, but he is unfortunately not the least like the artist.

The sketches of the youthful Titus are numerous and interesting, and they carry us on to the drawings from the nude which form an important class among the Rembrandt studies. Among the drawings, there may be specially noticed a very sympathetic study at Stockholm which shows us Titus seated in coat and knee breeches with a cap on his head. The foot is raised on a stool. His features are refined and intellectual, and have a thoughtful even anxious expression. (See Plate 15.) A drawing in the Fodor Museum, Amsterdam,[3] shows him posing for a youthful Christ, who is apparently discoursing with a company of bystanders of various ages about Him. He looks less than twenty years of age, and is of elastic and graceful figure, with the delicate features and long curling locks which we soon learn to associate with Titus van Rijn.

It is as model for the nude, that Titus has for the moment his chief interest for us in connection with the drawings. In dealing with the drawings it is natural to dwell specially on those qualities in Rembrandt's art that are represented better in these studies than in other parts

1 *Urkunden*, No. 43. 2 De Groot, 1013; Lippmann, I, 45.
3 De Groot, 1217; Lippmann, III, 85 b. (See postea, p. 282.)

of his work. Now though the nude figure, male and female, makes a considerable show in all three provinces of the master's activity, it is only in the drawings that we find much evidence of a feeling for grace and delicacy of form. On the whole Rembrandt sees more beauty in the male form than in the female. In the British Museum there is a graceful study of a male nude for one of the figures in the etching B. 194, and in the Bibliothèque Nationale one of still greater beauty for B. 193. These cannot of course be from Titus, who was only five years old at the date of the etchings, 1646, but it is quite possible, as Valentiner contends, that he sat for later studies of the same kind.

The supposed nude studies from Titus in which the subject appears youngest may be illustrated by a Heseltine drawing[1] where he is seen standing on a cushion with hands in front of him, looking down. The same model seems a little older where in the above collection he is seated on a box with hands clasped before him.[2] Yet another of Mr. Heseltine's studies gives us Titus (?) seated on a low stool in profile towards the right,[3] while the Albertina collection at Vienna possesses a still more graceful study in much the same pose. A black chalk study in the hands of M. Bonnat in Paris[4] of a seated youth is one of the most beautiful of all. There are others in the Louvre and in the British Museum. In the latter collection may be singled out an attractive seated figure holding a flute in his hands.[5] How far we are right in recognizing Titus

1 De Groot, 1028; Lippmann, II, 68. M. de Groot does not recognize Titus in these drawings, which he dates about 1646.

2 De Groot, 1027; Lippmann, I, 44.

3 De Groot, 1026; Lippmann, II, 66.

4 De Groot, 747; Lippmann, II, 3.

5 Kleinmann, III, 40.

in these studies is a question of minor importance. The chief point about them is their beauty. On the whole the resemblance of these supposed 'Titus' drawings to those for the dated etchings of 1646 seems to preclude the idea that they were really studies from Saskia's latest born.

In all these studies we are struck by the grace and elasticity of the slender form, the refinement of the features and the almost feminine softness of the curling locks. Most of the studies are outlined with the pen, but the chalk in M. Bonnat's is manipulated so as to give the breadth of modelling and the *morbidezza* of the larger planes, while the crisp touches of black sharpen the whole into vividness and precision. The hands are masterly in drawing. In Mr. Heseltine's seated study the brush has been used to give a play of reflected lights over the shadowed torso and face, that is most exquisite in quality. It is not however the technique of the beautiful studies with which we are chiefly concerned, but rather the evidence they afford that the artist had at times a real appreciation of the grace of a slender but well-knit human body, when such was presented before his eyes. There is nothing in these drawings to give occasion for the reproach so often, and on the whole so justly, urged against the master, that he was satisfied with, or even selected, clumsy and coarse types of the nude.

When we turn from these male studies to those among the drawings which portray the female nude we receive something of a shock, for the feminine delicacy apparent in the 'Titus' drawings is in most cases conspicuously absent. Among the drawings nude studies exist in some abundance of Hendrickje Stoffels. That in the Hofstede

de Groot collection at the Hague,[1] a seated figure with arms raised, is most unmistakably like Hendrickje in face, but others are tolerably recognizable. There are two Heseltine drawings from Hendrickje that are pleasing enough and give a fairly delicate and refined version of the subject.[2] The Amsterdam drawing is not so happy.[3] The British Museum has a study of a female figure for the etching B. 192, 'The Artist Drawing from a Model,' and also for that of the 'Woman with an Arrow,' B. 202, that is dated 1661, and Valentiner thinks Hendrickje sat for both, though in the year 1661 Hendrickje was so much out of health that she made her will on August 7, her death following a year or two later. That Hendrickje is the original of the two fine drawings in the British Museum shown on Plate 21 there seems no reason to doubt, and at the British Museum these are held to be studies for the remarkable etchings of the late period B. 197, 199, 200 (postea, p. 175).

We can discern the features of Saskia in the semi-nude drawing in black chalk, in the Beckerath collection now in the Museum at Berlin,[4] which is a study for the Susannah of the Hague picture for which Saskia certainly sat. A nude study in the Heseltine collection,[5] reproduced in Émil Michel's *Rembrandt*, p. 388, that strikes every one who looks at it as almost revoltingly coarse in form and unpleasant in expression, has been claimed by Valentiner for Geertjen Dircks, and we are satisfied to make the lady a present of the effigy.

1 De Groot, 1303; Lippmann, III, 95.
2 De Groot, 1033, 1032; Lippmann, I, 86, 87.
3 De Groot, 1199; Lippmann, II, 87.
4 De Groot, 46; Lippmann, I, 197. 5 De Groot, 1031; Lippmann, I, 91.

PLATE 21. TWO STUDIES OF THE FEMALE NUDE

CHAPTER VII

THE ETCHED WORK OF REMBRANDT

The processes of engraving. The nature of etching. The question of 'states.' Catalogues and reproductions of Rembrandt's etchings; the question of genuineness; the chronology of the etchings.

The early self-studies: later self-portraits. Studies of beggars. First essays in the nude. The Saskia etchings. Early religious pieces and the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds.' Etchings of 1641–51. The landscapes: the portrait-etchings: the later nudes. Figure subjects from the Old and New Testaments. The 'Death of Mary': the 'Broad Presentation': the '100 Florin Plate': 'Christ as Teacher.' The latest religious pieces.

The technique of the etchings: use of the etched line, of the dry-point, of the graver. Rembrandt as printer. Examples of his use of the various technical methods.

In all forms of engraving the 'print' is produced by the transfer of ink from certain portions of the surface of a wooden block, or smooth stone, or metal plate, to a sheet of paper or similar substance. The parts inked are the lines or patches of shade that produce the design, and the block, or stone, or plate is so prepared that the ink is confined to these parts, the rest of the surface remaining clean. With the preparation of the wood-cutter's block or the lithographer's stone we are not concerned, for, unlike Dürer, Rembrandt confined himself to engravings on metal.

In this case the parts of the plate that are to receive the ink are roughened or worked into grooves or hollows. These are charged with ink, and paper softened by damping is pressed against the surface so as to be forced into the recesses and to extract from them the colouring-matter. The methods of producing these receptacles for the ink vary in the different processes of the metal-engraver's art. Here again we are not concerned with certain special methods of manipulating a plate, such as the 'mezzotint' or 'stipple' or 'aquatint' processes,[1] which Rembrandt did not employ, but with the older and more usual 'line' methods.

In the forms of engraving practised by Rembrandt grooves are incised upon the surface of a polished sheet of copper. These incisions are produced in three different ways, by the graver or burin, by what is known as the 'dry-point,' and by the etching process. Let us imagine a polished sheet of copper a twelfth to an eighth of an inch in thickness; one or two sharp instruments of steel; ink, of the consistency though not the exact composition of printer's ink; and dabbers and cloths for spreading the ink and wiping away any superfluity. The steel instrument known as a graver is a bar of metal some four inches long and rhomboidal in section; one end is fixed into a wooden handle shaped like a half-mushroom that is held against the palm of the hand, and the other end is splayed off at an angle so as to leave a sharply projecting corner. This angular point is driven by the pressure of the palm of the hand

[1] H. W. Singer and W. Strang, in *Etching Engraving and other methods of Printing Pictures*, London, 1897, give an account of all the various processes.

along the surface of the copper so as to excavate in it a narrow furrow, that may vary within certain limits in depth and thickness. As the stroke of the graver can only be made in one direction, by pushing it away from the person, it is customary to turn the plate itself in accordance with the line which it is to follow, and this necessarily gives a certain formality and deliberateness to the graver's work.

The older engravers, of whom Albrecht Dürer may be taken as an example, produced most of the lines of their design in this manner, keeping their strokes strictly regular and parallel to each other, and as a rule curving them to correspond to the form under delineation. The work was very precise and accurate but lacked the quality of freedom. By turning the plate the graver can of course be made to follow any desired direction, but it is its special mission everywhere to produce the clear, clean, firmly controlled line.

For lines which are to have more spontaneity and freedom and a more wayward variety in direction, another instrument is more suitable and this is the so-called 'dry-point,' which is a simple stylus of steel, like a large needle or stiletto, with which the engraver scratches the surface of the plate wherever he wishes the ink to hold. The tool is not adapted like the graver for cutting out from the grooves slender filaments of copper, but forces its way through the yielding metal, raising it up in a ridge on one side or both of the incision, just as the earth is turned up by the ploughshare. It will easily be understood that when ink is applied to an incision of the kind, it not only fills the groove, as it fills the hollow cut by the graver, but

catches on the rough projections of the ridge just mentioned, which is technically known as 'burr,' or, as the French call it, *barbe*, and, as the Germans, *Grat*. Hence more ink is retained at such a place and is transferred in greater abundance to the paper, producing a bold, rich, somewhat irregular mark, contrasting with the clear line resulting from the graver. If desired this 'burr' can be removed from the plate by the use of a scraper with a sharp edge. A plate so treated is called by the French '*ébarbé*' 'with the burr removed.'

The device known as 'etching' supplies the engraver with another method of producing the required incisions that is characterized by still greater ease and freedom. In etching the copper plate is covered with a film of varnish called 'etching ground,' and the artist draws upon this with a metal point, using only enough pressure to scratch through the ground and leave the copper below exposed. When all the required lines have been drawn in this way on the plate it is immersed in a bath of acid, which eats into the metal wherever it has been laid bare, the parts still covered with the varnish film remaining untouched. As these lines have not to be ploughed through the metal by main strength, but only lightly sketched, the process admits of great vivacity in handling. According to the bluntness or fineness of the point used the lines may vary in thickness, or they may become only a series of dots. They may follow any desired direction, and the technique favours a sketchy suggestive touch. From the nature of the action of the acid it will follow that the line, though it has no 'burr,' will not be so clean as that produced by the graver. As a rule also it will differ

from the lines cut or gashed by the other tools in that it has the same width throughout, whereas the latter lines naturally fine off at each end where the tool begins to penetrate and where it leaves the plate.

When all the lines of the design are produced in one of these methods or in a combination of them, the plate is dabbed over with ink, which fills all the hollows prepared for it, and adheres also to the polished surface of the plate where it has not been incised. Strictly speaking the plate should now be wiped so as to remove all the pigment from the polished surfaces but to leave it in all the hollows, and attached, where these exist, to the 'burrs.' Such a plate, when the paper is pressed upon it, will yield the ink from the lines and 'burrs,' but will leave no mark from its polished portions which correspond to the lights of the print. In modern times however it is often the custom to leave on the polished parts here and there, according to the effect required, thin films of ink which produce delicate flat or mottled tones on the print, quite independent of the etched or engraved lines. To manipulate these films requires of course dexterity on the part of the printer, and the printer in the process of inking and of wiping the plate may in this way contribute largely to the ultimate artistic effect. In any case, whether or not he adopts these somewhat questionable devices, he will have to be careful that the lines are all sufficiently charged with ink, without being overcharged, which would cause the pigment to spread unduly. In order that the paper shall take up all the ink in the hollows, heavy pressure is required, and as copper is soft it will easily be seen that the projecting ridges already spoken of will soon wear away, and the

more delicate and lightly incised lines will in time almost disappear. Hence the number of impressions which a plate will yield without showing signs of wear is limited, and on this fact depends much of what makes the difficulty and the fascination of the study of prints.

At the threshold of this study there presents itself the question of 'states.' The processes of engraving a plate are, as we have just seen, various. A design is not necessarily finished at a stroke. It may grow gradually to perfection through a combination of these processes, and the artist himself can only know when his idea is being thoroughly carried out by taking from time to time impressions by which to test progress. Several such trial impressions may be pulled, and then the artist may bethink himself of some improvement and alter the plate accordingly. The pulls subsequent to this change will of course differ from the previous ones, and the two sets may be said to represent two different states of the plate. It is obvious however that a mere trial proof, before there is any idea that the work is complete, cannot be held to constitute a state, and should be placed in a distinct category. States should only begin to be counted when the plate is in theory finished, when the artist, that is to say, has carried out his idea, and is in the meantime satisfied. Subsequently, it is true, he can attempt alterations, which may or may not issue in real improvements, and fresh states will then result. Some of Rembrandt's most conspicuous works such as the 'Ecce Homo in Long,' or the 'Three Crosses,' were in this way taken up again after practical completion and greatly altered, and the prints have come down to us representing distinct and well-marked states.

The states produced by alterations on a practically finished plate constitute one class, and another class is formed when worn plates are reworked to restore the qualities which have been lost in printing. This is up to a certain point a quite legitimate and artistic process. and has been followed by the greatest masters of the art, The plates of Turner's 'Liber Studiorum,' engraved by the special process, not used by Rembrandt, known as mezzotint, wore very rapidly, and the artist displayed extraordinary skill, not to say cunning, in restoring artistic quality to plates thus used. In the present day an engraved or scraped (mezzotinted) copper plate can be covered with an electro-deposit of steel of infinitesimal thinness which immensely increases its durability, but the older engravers had no such resource, and Rembrandt and the rest had often to retouch a plate for the reason just explained. An impression from such a retouched plate represents of course a new state and is noted as such. The process however cannot go on for long with satisfactory results, and there must come a time when the artist is conscious that the real life of the plate is over. It is, on the other hand, possible for plates which are really quite worn out to be at any time furbished up anew by other hands than those of the original artist. The result is not really a state of the original plate but a new work founded on the old, and as a rule of course immeasurably inferior to it. This was often done in the eighteenth century. A classic instance is the treatment of the '100 Florin Plate,' B. 74, by a Captain Baillie, who in the year 1775 reworked the copper which had passed into his possession, and printed and sold impressions therefrom. Some of Rembrandt's

engraved plates still exist and could theoretically be worked up and used again in the press.

There is also a third meaning of the word 'state.' It often happens that, when a plate is being printed from, some slight or accidental defect becomes apparent. When this has been corrected subsequent impressions show a difference from the earlier ones, and a new state is proclaimed. The difference may not be of any artistic importance, but the fact of the alteration having been made is of chronological value, as giving the period in the history of the plate when the particular set of impressions was pulled. In general of course a plate suffers a progressive deterioration, so that earlier impressions, or impressions from earlier states, are to be preferred to later ones. Two considerations must however here be borne in mind. Mere priority is not always a true test of proportionate value, for (1) an early print may be nothing but a trial proof representing the plate before its author himself considered it to be finished ; it may thus give an imperfect idea of the work, though on the other hand it may have that freshness and brilliancy which will endear it to the heart of the connoisseur. Further, (2) when a plate is becoming worn and ready to be retouched, a late impression before the retouching will not be so good as an early impression from the reworked plate, though the former will represent an earlier state.

On the whole, for the purposes of the intelligent lover of art rather than the collector, the only states of which account need be taken are those which represent distinct stages in the history of the plate while under the artist's own care, from the moment he considered it complete to

the date when he retouched it for the last time with his own hand.

The study of Rembrandt's etchings has been immensely facilitated in recent years by the excellent series of complete reproductions which have been published. Three of these are before the public, the first issued by Charles Blanc in 1880,[1] the second by M. E. Dutuit three years later,[2] and the third by Senator Dmitri Rovinski, in 1890.[3] Dutuit's reproductions have the merit of giving each plate the original size, while Rovinski furnishes the student with an invaluable aid by showing each plate in all its various states.

Any publication of Rembrandt's etchings that aims at completeness will proceed upon some definite criteria of what is genuinely the master's work, and upon some scheme of arrangement. The longest list of the etchings is that given in the all-important catalogue of Bartsch that appeared in 1797,[4] and this included 375 numbers. Probably the smallest muster is that which satisfies the distinguished painter Alphonse Legros, who is said to recognize 71 pieces as certain, and 42 more as possible, works of the master. The recent volume of the *Klassiker der Kunst*,[5] in which Rembrandt's etchings are published by Dr. Singer

1 *L'Œuvre de Rembrandt Décrit et Commenté*, Paris, 1850, 1 vol. Text, 3 vols. Plates, folio.

2 *L'Œuvre Complet de Rembrandt*, Paris, 1883; 2 vols. 4to and Atlas in folio.

3 *L'Œuvre Gravé de Rembrandt. Reproduction des planches originales dans tous leurs états successifs.* 1000 *phototypies sans retouches.* St. Petersburg, 1890; Atlas in fol., Text in 4to.

4 *Catalogue Raisonné de toutes les Estampes qui forment l'Œuvre de Rembrandt*, Vienne, 1797.

5 Stuttgart und Leipzig, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1906.

of the Dresden Cabinet of Prints, contains a selection reduced to 142 examples accepted as certain and 75 doubtful ones. Such drastic recissions from the traditional catalogue go too far, and will be found to depend in great part on subjective criteria on which no two experts will agree. It is absurd to reject everything in that catalogue that we consider unworthy of Rembrandt, for there is plenty of absolutely authenticated work by the master, in painting as in other materials, that is not up to the higher standard of his achievement. Without going into the question of the criteria of genuineness which there is no space to discuss, it may be sufficient to refer to the sane and carefully compiled catalogue by von Seidlitz,[1] who describes all the 375 items of Bartsch with about a score besides, but marks all the latter with a number of those of Bartsch as not by Rembrandt, or as very doubtful, so that his full list of the genuine works amounts to 264, while about a dozen more are marked as doubtful. This agrees generally with the average estimate of modern critics. The most elaborate of the earlier critical catalogues, that by Charles Henry Middleton,[2] included as genuine 329 items, and Charles Blanc in 1880 acknowledged 353. Michel however in 1893 stopped at 270, and Friedrich Lippmann[3] accepted the same number, thus agreeing closely with von Seidlitz. In the case of unimportant plates the question of inclusion or exclusion is not of general interest, but there are three or four large and important religious

1 *Kritisches Verzeichniss der Radierungen Rembrandts*, Leipzig, Seemann, 1895.

2 *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Rembrandt van Rhyn*, London, 1878.

3 *Engraving and Etching*, Eng. Trans., London, 1906, p. 178.

pieces, the 'Good Samaritan' of 1632–3, B. 90; the 'Large Lazarus,' c. 1633, B. 73; the 'Ecce Homo' (high format) of 1635–6, B. 77; the 'Large Taking Down from the Cross,' 1633, B. 81, that are acknowledged to be joint productions of Rembrandt and some of his pupils. These were numerous at the epoch of the plates, and we have evidence that according to the custom of the time Rembrandt might sign and date work partly (or even almost wholly) executed by them from his designs (ante p. 67). In the case of the 'Ecce Homo,' the National Gallery contains the fine grisaille from the master's own hand prepared expressly for the etching, while the 'Taking Down' reproduces Rembrandt's picture of the same subject now at Munich, and the early picture of the 'Good Samaritan' in the Wallace collection is the foundation of the above mentioned etching B. 90. At the same time the execution of all these plates seems in the main so flat and lifeless, that it is best in dealing with Rembrandt's etched work to leave them out of consideration as pupils' work.[1]

The question of arrangement, which involves that of numeration, is as troublesome as the question of authenticity. Bartsch adopted and rendered classical a division of the etchings according to their subjects into twelve classes, Self-Portraits, Old Testament Scenes, New Testament Scenes—and so on; and numbered the items continuously from beginning to end of the whole list. No account in this arrangement is taken of chronology, and it is of course natural that in more modern times, when the

1 Opinions seem to differ most about the 'Good Samaritan,' which Seymour Haden rejected as the production of a pupil, while von Seidlitz calls it 'ein Hauptwerk des Meisters.'

successive stages in the development of the master's art have been so minutely studied and discussed, a feeling should have been expressed for the more scientific arrangement in order of time. Rembrandt himself turned easily from one class of subject to another, and in a catalogue there is no need to keep the different themes apart. If it were possible to fix the dates of the various pieces, a chronological arrangement should certainly be established, but only about a third of the etchings are dated, and it would be impossible to secure unanimity among experts as regards the placing of the undated majority. Attempts at a chronological order were made by Vosmaer in 1868 and 1877, at the exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1877, and more recently in the fourth appendix to the catalogue of von Seidlitz, which may be regarded as the soundest list of all. Until however there is a general acceptance of a chronology of the etchings, it is best to adhere to the classification and numeration of Bartsch, whose numbers, B. 1, etc., have been used in these pages. Words fail to express the irritation the student of the etchings feels at times against the various writers, Claussin, Wilson, Blanc, Middleton, Dutuit, and the rest, who have severally adopted numerations of their own, to which no one else has agreed, and which only serve to bring the study into confusion.[1] It is as bad as the double numeration of the Mycenae tombs.

A general survey of the etched work of Rembrandt from

[1] Middleton's plan of arranging chronologically, but only within four separate classes arbitrarily formed, seems like a case of mental aberration.

the chronological standpoint gives the following result. The order adopted is that of von Seidlitz. At the outset we are met by a very puzzling phenomenon. The three earliest dated etchings are two portraits of the artist's mother, 1628, B. 352, 354; and one of himself, 1629, B. 338. The heads of his mother, especially B. 354, are admirably executed, with perfect ease and at the same time with an assurance that makes every stroke do its work and avoids the least superfluous touch. B. 354, given on Plate 9 a, ante p. 50, excited the unbounded admiration of Charles Blanc, who thought it one of the best of all the etchings. A glance at the reproduction will show that the work gives no sign at all of a prentice hand. On the other side the self-portrait of 1629 is executed in the rudest possible manner, as some one has suggested, 'with an old nail,' and though it has a freshness and force that mark it as Rembrandt's own it is quite unlike the accomplished work of the two heads of the mother. Lippmann has cut the Gordian knot by a surmise that Rembrandt 'completely reworked at a later time the two woman's heads dated 1628, and it is only in this later state that they have come down to us.'[1] If this be the case, we may ask how it is that the pieces in question are signed with Rembrandt's monogram in an early form, that does not occur after 1632? Dr. Singer, who calls the etching 'one of the most masterly works of art of which the world can boast the possession,' frankly rejects the date and monogram, and puts the work at about 1640.

Apart from these three puzzling pieces, the earliest examples of the etchings are of the kind we should

1 *Engraving and Etching*, p. 168.

naturally expect, immature in handling but careful and full of life and of promise. Some of them are portraits of Rembrandt's mother and father, of both of whom there are several versions among the etchings, though his sister has not been recognized, but the most characteristic are studies of Rembrandt's own features and are frankly experimental. He has used them to teach himself the mechanism of facial expression, and has grimaced at himself in the glass with features laughing or gloomy, sneering or savage or aghast.[1] These little heads have a curious interest. They show that the self-portrait, which bulks so largely in Rembrandt's work, was not a symptom of personal vanity. Rembrandt was at no time of his life surrounded like Vandyke with courtly dames, for whom he would picture himself with languishing eyes and hyacinthine locks, and the main interest of his self-portraits is an artistic one. This early series of etched heads illustrates the earnestness in self-schooling which struck Huygens so forcibly in the youthful artist, and at the same time they exhibit the naivety and simplicity of his nature. There is something amateurish about them. They do not represent the real way an artist learns, and we may doubt if they were ever of much use. Hogarth was accustomed to note down any out-of-the-way or grotesque expressions he saw, and he actually used these sketches for his pictures and plates, but Hogarth pushed expression to the verge of caricature, and in this he differed from Rembrandt. Rembrandt showed himself in his later work a master of expression, but it was never forced. The grimaces he learned from

[1] Bréal's *Rembrandt*, London, Duckworth, 1902, gives a selection of these heads.

PLATE 22.—REMBRANDT LEANING ON A STONE SILL. ETCHING, B. 21

his reflection in the glass he never employed in his serious figure-compositions. It is probable that Rembrandt was at the time misled by the works of Lucas van Leyden and other painters of the non-italianizing northern schools, in which expression for the sake of expression was a prominent characteristic.

This series of self-studies, in which only the head appeared, was followed in 1631 by a half-length in which a more formal and pictorial character is assumed, and Rembrandt poses in a hat and an embroidered mantle, B. 7. This reminds us of his activity as a painter of commissioned portraits which was beginning at this time (ante, p. 63). A little later we are met by etched work of far greater pretension, that corresponds with the painted self-portraits in elaborate costume of the thirties (postea, p. 253). There are the two Rembrandts of 1634—one, B. 23, in which he is standing in military pomp and pride leaning his hand on a sabre, the other, B. 18, a bust with sabre on shoulder; there is the Rembrandt of 1638, B. 20, with the feather in his flat cap, and richly embroidered mantle; and there is above all the wonderful self-portrait of 1639, B. 21, where Rembrandt has taken a pose suggested by Raphael's portrait of Castiglione,[1] and leans his arm on a stone sill. In technical execution this is one of the master's finest efforts. It is shown on Plate 22. In this series of four carefully studied costume-portraits we find Rembrandt endeavouring to get the same kind of artistic quality in the rendering of

1 In this year, 1639, the portrait in question was sold by auction in Amsterdam, fetching the price of 3500 gulden. Rembrandt was at the sale and sketched the picture in an extant drawing. This drawing and the etching founded on it are reproduced side by side in the *Klassiker der Kunst, Rembrandt*, Leipzig, 1904, pp. xxiv–v.

the texture of stuffs and glance of jewels and polished arms which he sought in his paintings through the media of colour and brush-work. A self-portrait with Saskia, of 1636, has been mentioned (ante, p. 72) as a foil to the flamboyant painting at Dresden where he holds his wife on his knee.

Only two more etched self-portraits occur, and exhibit a contrast with the last that is of great biographical as well as artistic interest. One is B. 22, given on Plate 23, and dates from 1648, after the change in Rembrandt's life and fortunes. The look of age in the face is borne out by the other piece, B. 370, which is a mere sketch of the same face but without a hat. The hair is here evidently very thin. From the technical standpoint, B. 22 is valuable as a standard for comparing later work with earlier (see postea, p. 197).

Closely related to the earliest set of self-studies are a number of contemporary pieces representing picturesque mendicants, with whom Leyden, as we have seen, was particularly well supplied. Bartsch makes his whole sixth class consist of these studies, which belong nearly all to the earliest thirties. They are freely etched, and B. 163, 164, 165, 172, 179 (a cripple) are good examples. They are not, it must be understood, psychologically interesting, as is the case with the dwarfs and idiots of Velasquez, nor touched with any of that compassionate sympathy we discern in J. F. Millet's studies of the poor. Later on, when Rembrandt came to introduce such figures into his compositions, such as the '100 Florin Plate,' he treats them with far more insight and sympathy, but for the moment they appealed to him from the point of view of the suit-

PLATE 23.—REMBRANDT DRAWING AT A WINDOW
ETCHING, B. 22

To face p. 162

ability of dishevelled hair and tatters as subjects for the etching needle. The 'Seller of Rat Poison,' of 1632, B. 121, is an early attempt to use these studies for a regular composition, while the subsequent etching of 1648, 'Beggars Receiving Alms at a House-door,' B. 176, is an example of the later more sympathetic treatment, and it must not be forgotten that it is a worn and weary wayfarer, on whom the rags scarce hold together, that is the inspiration of Rembrandt's last and greatest masterpiece in religious art.[1]

Two remarkable works of the Leyden period are studies of the female nude. One, B. 198, is an uncompromisingly truthful study of an ugly model; and the other, B. 201, a much prettier version of the same young female with her feet in the water as 'Diana Bathing.' The latter is given on Plate 24. It is instructive as showing a very marked and, in the circumstances, fairly successful effort to refine on the crude facts of imperfect nature and pay due homage to the tradition of formal beauty in the naked figure. The same model also serves for the 'Danaë and Jupiter,' B. 204.

The Saskia etchings are not nearly so important as the Saskia pictures, and may be mentioned here. The most important plate for which she sat is the so-called 'Jewish Bride' of 1635, B. 340, where there is a grand display of long wavy tresses and rich apparel, but we have more of Saskia herself in some heads lightly sketched, on one or two of those plates covered with delicate studies where we find some of the master's most fascinating work. B. 365 and 367 are examples. B. 369 seems to show Saskia lying in bed ill.

1 The 'Return of the Prodigal,' at the Hermitage. See Frontispiece.

Some unimportant New Testament pieces lead on to the large 'Good Samaritan,' B. 90, of 1632-3, and the other pieces mentioned ante, p. 157, as in execution the work of pupils, but in this department the epoch-making work, corresponding to the 'Simeon' of the Hague among the pictures, is the remarkable 'Annunciation to the Shepherds' of 1634, B. 44. Here into the midst of deepest night explodes the sudden radiance of the celestial vision, while in the foreground the flocks and herds are in wildest agitation. The piece has been blamed as somewhat theatrical, and it exhibits a little of that traditional over-vehemence of northern design observable in much of Rembrandt's earlier work, but it is an effort of genius, one of the astounding achievements which proclaim the master, and which set Rembrandt on a height far above any of the other etchers of his time and country. (See Plate 25.[1])

Up to this time the etchings have been very numerous, but after 1634–5 they became for a few years less frequent, to be resumed again with fresh ardour after 1641. The decade from 1641 to 1651 is that of many of the finest examples, which are carried out with a complete mastery of all the varied resources of the line-engraver's art. Two new groups of the highest importance now make their appearance, the formal portraits and the landscapes. For both there had been preparation—in the elaborate self-portraits of 1634–9 and in the landscape of the 'Annunciation' which is full of varied interest.

The landscapes may be noticed first as they form a compact group lying almost all within the decade just

1 Dr. Singer regards the piece as 'doubtful' on certain technical grounds.

PLATE 24.—DIANA BATHING ETCHING, B. 201

To face p. 164

mentioned. Excluding a number of pieces that cannot be genuine, we can count up nearly thirty examples. Most of them are the same in feeling as the landscape studies among the drawings already referred to, ante, p. 122 f., but one is the most imaginative and masterly landscape composition in the whole of the master's work. The reference is of course to the 'Three Trees' of 1643, B. 212, see Plate 26. The contrast of light and shade is as strong here as in the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds,' but it is natural not visionary. A storm of rain is sweeping away towards the left, and the sky, under some nearer rain-clouds that are still hanging darkly above, is of blinding brightness accentuated still more by the opposition of the dark mass of the trees that give the plate its name. These stand on the top of a bank on the right and the nearer slope of this is of velvety blackness relieved with touches of light reflected from leaves and stones and from the surface of a stream in the foreground. On the left-hand side the eye is carried away into infinite distance over flat country delineated in a style that reminds us of de Koninck, but was really learned by de Koninck from his master Rembrandt.

The impression of space and distance is a constant factor in the effect of Rembrandt's etched landscapes, but the rest of them are less dramatic, and less powerful in contrasts of light and shade. Some of those of a year or two earlier than the 'Three Trees' are curiously exact in delineation of detail. Of such a kind is the well-known 'Windmill' of 1641, B. 233, that von Seidlitz speaks of as 'for atmosphere and for delicacy perhaps the master's finest landscape.' It does not, as we have seen (ante, p. 47) represent

'Rembrandt's Mill,' but is a study of an old timber structure and its appurtenances, touched with the lightest and at the same time the firmest hand that ever held an etching needle. The drawing of the sails is most spirited. In B. 225, and B. 226, both studies of cottages, there is a beautiful rendering of the varieties of texture in timber or thatch. The view of Omval on the Amstel near Amsterdam, of 1645, B. 209, reproduced on Plate 18 (ante, p. 124), is remarkable on the one hand for the elaborate drawing of the willow trunk in the left foreground, and on the other for the clean and summary execution of the river and more distant view to the right. It is probable that these are really two subjects from which Rembrandt has made a single composition.[1] For directness and simplicity B. 208, the so-called 'Bridge of Six' cannot be surpassed. Of pieces like this Lippmann has said that 'an effect is obtained by the most simple means which further finish could hardly improve.'[2] The master-work in this style is the 'Gold-Weigher's Country Seat,' B. 234, a panoramic view, in the foreground of which is the estate of the Receiver-General or State Treasurer Uytenbogaert, whose portrait Rembrandt (or his pupils) etched in 1639. Von Seidlitz writes of it that 'the impression of the most perfect truth to nature has been conveyed by the simplest means with exclusive attention to what is essential. Small as is the scale there is endless variety in what is shown and the glance is carried to infinite distance.' In the reproduction, Plate 5, it will be seen how cunningly the lines are led so as to broaden out the spaces, and give that look of limitless extent that

[1] Michel, *Rembrandt*, p. 319.
[2] *Engraving and Etching*, p. 171.

PLATE 25.—THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE SHEPHERDS. ETCHING. B. 41

To face p. 186

one obtains from a slight elevation in a flat country such as Holland. The piece, which dates 1651, is one of the latest of the group, and it is interesting to note the contrast between its summary treatment, making for the utmost largeness of effect, and the conscientious insistence upon detail of the earlier 'Windmill' and related pieces. This is just the whole development of Rembrandt's art in small, for all through his life there is at work a progressive simplification and consequent enlargement of style.

In connection with the landscapes a few pieces may be referred to as containing landscape in connection with figures, and as exhibiting the poetic side of Rembrandt's art. Bartsch's fourth class, 'Holy Persons,' gives us various studies of St. Jerome and St. Francis in solitude, among which B. 104, a 'St. Jerome Reading' shows a landscape undoubtedly inspired by Titian. The 'St. Francis' of 1657, B. 107, is a magnificent torso, hewn into the plate by Rembrandt with the dry-point in a moment of superabounding vitality, that hardly seems to reflect the influence of the bankruptcy of the year before! Sir Seymour Haden noticed that the figure of the saint and the landscape both seemed inspired by Titian, or perhaps Campagnola. Allied to this wonderful piece by a certain mystic charm, though different in theme, is the 'Faustus' of c. 1652, B. 270, a greatly admired etching, showing the philosopher in his study startled by a visionary appearance.

The portrait etchings cover a large part of Rembrandt's later career and embrace some of his most interesting work. In the landscapes and in the great majority of the studies previously noticed the question of states is not very important. The 'Three Trees' for example only occurs in

one state. In the case of the portraits however, and the later self-portrait, B. 22, must be included, there is a good deal of difference in the states, and alterations are made that in some cases quite change the expression of the face. Such changes Rembrandt cannot as a rule have intended, and they probably merely followed in many cases as a consequence of modifications in the work due to artistic reasons only. This is a further proof that Rembrandt was not what would be called a conscientious portraitist in the matter of likeness, but would, unconsciously it may be, sacrifice this to the all-important considerations of light-and-shade or effect. In other cases the alterations in the physiognomy seem deliberate, but the question still remains whether the artist made them to please himself or because he was constrained by a regard for exact resemblance. Thus the expression of the face of Uytenbogaert, B. 279, is in the second state of the plate smiling and genial but in the first state severe, and the touches which brought about the change can be clearly seen. The expression of Clement de Jonghe, B. 272, suffers a curious transformation through the states, due largely to work on the chiaroscuro of the face. The 'Younger Haaring,' B. 275, has in the first state of the plate a very subtle expression of gravity touched with melancholy, but in the second he has become haggard and woebegone. It is possible that the second state is not from Rembrandt's own hand.

On the other hand Rembrandt is certainly responsible for the second state of the 'Old Haaring,' in which the markings between the brows have given to the face an appearance of anxiety. The 'Large Coppenol,' B. 283, on the other hand, keeps his somewhat aggressively paedagogic

aspect unchanged to the end. On the 'Bonus,' see postea, p. 197.

The portraits begin in 1635 and the first set of them are theologians. There is B. 269, the learned Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel, whose historical mission to Cromwell on behalf of his co-religionists is well known, and for whom Rembrandt illustrated a book with four plates, B. 36; there are the Arminian and Mennonite preachers, Jan Uytenbogaert, B. 279, and Cornelius Claesz Anslo, B. 271, with Rembrandt's old friend Jan Sylvius, B. 280, whom he etched in 1646 some years after his death. Within the following decade fall most of the more important portraits, the series of which ends with the 'Large Coppenol,' B. 283, the exact date of which is uncertain. Coppenol was a famous master in calligraphy of the day, and there are two very early Rembrandt portraits on canvas at St. Petersburg and Cassel that are believed to represent the same sitter when a young man. The finest of the whole set of etchings under consideration are the portraits of the Portuguese Jew physician, Ephraim Bueno or Bonus, B. 278, and of Jan Six at the window, B. 285, both of 1647; the dealer in engravings, Clement de Jonghe, B. 272, of 1651, and above all the 'Old Haaring' and 'Jan Lutma,' B. 274, 276, of c. 1655 and 1656, with the contemporary 'Tholinx,' B. 284, called generally the 'Advocate' Tholinx, though he was in the medical profession. A print of the first state of the 'Tholinx,' it may be mentioned, changed hands in 1883 at a price of over £1500. Of somewhat less value are the painter Jan Asselyn, c. 1647, B. 277; the professor of medicine Jan Antonides van der Linden, B. 264, and the 'Small Coppenol,' B. 282, of about

1653, the 'Younger Haaring,' 1655, B. 275; and the art dealer Francen, c. 1656, B. 273, a plate already referred to for its sociological interest (ante, p. 32).

The 'Bonus' is a general favourite. Who does not know the tiny man with the impressive head under the broad-brimmed hat, as he stands at the foot of the stairs, his arm (drawn too short) resting on the end of the balustrade? He is evidently pausing to think of something. Rovinski thus reads the expression: 'He descends the stairs after visiting a patient and his features betray preoccupation; has he properly diagnosed the case? is the remedy prescribed the right one? Perhaps the sick person is one specially dear to him and there seems but little chance of saving him; should he not go back and make a further examination?'[1] The 'Six,' called 'Burgomaster Six,' though he did not hold the office till a much later date, is perhaps still more familiar, and is universally recognized as one of the very finest productions of the engraver's art. It is an example of one kind of portrait, in which the subject is set in a carefully designed *milieu*, surrounded with objects that not only help to make up a picture but show the character and interests of the sitter. In another kind of portrait the person is all in all and the background is bare of all accessories. All great portraitists have tried both methods, and neither they nor the lovers of their work can say which kind is the more artistic and

[1] Dr. Singer rejects the 'Bonus' etching as only a reproduction by another hand of the small oil portrait of the physician by Rembrandt that hangs near 'Jan Six' in the Six collection at Amsterdam. Others will not have it because the arm is too short, but they have not noticed that this is a Rembrandt peculiarity observable in the arm of the 'subject' in the 'Lesson on Anatomy' and elsewhere.

more truly pictorial. Holbein favours accessories, Velasquez does without them, but which is the finer portrait, the 'Georg Gysis' of the former at Berlin with its wealth of exquisitely figured detail, or the 'Admiral' by the latter in the National Gallery, where there is nothing of the kind? Rembrandt, who had a love for the glance and texture of objects, sometimes makes up his portraits somewhat elaborately, and the etched 'Francen' has already been cited as an illustration.[1] The surroundings of Jan Six show him as the aristocrat and scholar, and the treatment of the sword hilt and the books and other objects in the interior, which looks dark against the light of the window, is marked by surpassing delicacy and finish. With the 'Six' may be at once compared the 'Clement de Jonghe' of a few years later where the only object besides the sitter is part of the plain chair in which he is resting. The background is light, the tunic and cloak are slightly suggested, the hands are concealed by gloves, only about the head is there any strong light-and-shade, the technique is of the simplest; and yet some of the best judges have reckoned this the finest of all the portrait etchings after the 'Old Haaring.'[2] The last-named work is far more elaborate, and is a powerful composition in light-and-shade, in which those 'velvety' blacks, over which lovers of etchings are enthusiastic, are fully in evidence. To Vosmaer it is the 'ne plus ultra of etching,' and it is the

1 Ante, p. 32.

2 'Durch die Natürlichkeit der Auffassung und die Feinheit der Characteristik wirkt es vollkommen überzeugend. Die Arbeit ist von vollendeter Klarheit und Sauberkeit; der Mantel und alles Übrige ist absichtlich nur leicht angedeutet, aber mit äusserster Sicherheit hingesetzt,' von Seidlitz, *Verzeichniss*, p. 147. (See Plate 27.)

'pièce de prédilection' of Rovinski,[1] who delights specially in the light, suggestive handling of the face. The old man sits in a handsome chair, which appears in some of the other portrait pieces, against a latticed window on one side of which hangs a curtain. The hands are visible and are treated as integral parts of the composition.

Jan Lutma was the most famous goldsmith of his time in Holland, and Rembrandt has represented him as an old man seated in an arm chair, holding one of his own productions in metal work. Another specimen, with a hammer and case full of punches, lies on the table beside him. The blacks here in fine impressions are of unsurpassable richness, but to the general eye the chief attraction of the piece is the expression of the genial old man, who has taken his fill of the good things of life, and has not yet lost his power of quiet enjoyment. He is one of the most living and most sympathetic of the personages of his day to whom Rembrandt has introduced us.

That these were mostly men of some prominence is a fact not to be lost sight of in connection with the history of Rembrandt's later years (ante, p. 103). The younger Haaring was the auctioneer who had charge of the sale of the artist's effects, while the father, the elder Haaring, was concierge of the 'Desolate Boedelkamer' or Chamber of Insolvents at Amsterdam, and may have had official custody of the painter's goods or even of his person. It is interesting to note that Rembrandt revenged himself on his tormentors by connecting their names with imperishable masterpieces of his art.

Before passing to the most important of all the classes

[1] *L'Œuvre Gravé de Rembrandt*, text, p. xxv.

PLATE 27.—CLEMENT DE JONGHE. ETCHING, B. 272

To face p. 172

of the etchings, the figure-compositions, especially from sacred subjects, it will be well to notice one or two special pieces not readily grouped with others. The studies from real life of beggars and other such picturesque people led as we have seen to the 'Almsgiving' composition of 1648. A wonderful little piece dated 1635, the 'Pancake Woman,' B. 124, introduces us to child-life, and we remember that Rembrandt had then been married for a year or two. The etching, B. 310, dated 1641, is no doubt a portrait of Rumbartus, the first born, who has his head characteristically sunk down between his shoulders (ante, p. 140). In the foreground of B. 124 sprawls the same urchin who served for the 'Ganymede' picture of 1635 (ante, p. 142). The 'Lion Hunts' have been already mentioned (ante, p. 120) and there are other figure-pieces, some of allegorical import, that come into Bartsch's fifth class of 'Allegories and Scenes from Ordinary Life.' The 'Synagogue,' B. 126, contains some wonderfully characterized figures, reminding us of some of the best in the drawings. The 'Quack-Medicine Vendor,' of 1635, B. 129, is a miracle of delicate and tactful execution. The 'Cardplayer,' of 1641, B. 136, is of special interest when taken in connection with B. 261. The former shows a face full of character but of rugged plebeian type. In the latter piece of the same year he has deliberately refined the physiognomy, and given us a somewhat aristocratic half-figure with rich costume. This deliberate idealization of a model in the style of an Italianizer is with Rembrandt a noteworthy phenomenon. The specimen of pure still-life in the form of the etching of the shell, dated 1650, B. 159, should not be overlooked.

Nothing gives us a better idea of Rembrandt's variety

than the fact that the only other etching of the year 1643, beside the austere and imaginative design of the 'Three Trees,' is the study of a hog bound and prepared for the slaughter which we find under Bartsch's number 157. The children in the background are characteristic of the time. The piece has already been quoted as an example of Rembrandt's artistic interest in objects in themselves common and even unclean (ante, p. 26), but it may also be signalized for its freedom and mastery of handling both of needle and dry-point. Dutuit says of it that it has attained the furthest limit of art, and will probably never be surpassed.[1] (See Plate 4.)

The treatment of the nude in Rembrandt's etched work begins early as we have seen (ante, p. 163) with a study from the life and two more or less idealized renderings of the same model. We meet with no more nude studies of the kind till the year 1646, but the interval can be filled up with the much-debated 'Adam and Eve' of 1638, B. 28. Some have thought it 'not worthy of Rembrandt,' others that it was a parody, while von Seidlitz defends it from that charge, but imagines it a deliberate representation of our first parents 'in a still half-animal condition, but one capable of being perfected.' This prophecy of Darwinism was probably far from Rembrandt's mind! The piece is really very characteristic of the master, and he has signed it by the elephant—a fruit of the studies from that animal dating the year before (ante, p. 115 f.). The modelling of the flesh excited the warm admiration of Charles Blanc.

In the years 1646–7, there are several male studies, by

[1] *L'Œuvre Complet*, Introduction, p. 11.

far the most graceful of which is B. 193 (on drawings for these etchings, see ante, p. 143 f.). The interesting unfinished piece, B. 192, showing Rembrandt drawing from a female model, c. 1647, reminds us that we are in the middle of the period of the 'Susannah' and 'Bathsheba' pictures which begins in 1636 with a magnificent nude, the 'Danaë' of St. Petersburg (postea, p. 308), and ends with the technically still finer 'Bathsheba' of the Louvre, of 1654. Except however B. 192, we do not find the female nude etched till a later date, when the whole series of etchings may be said from the technical point of view to culminate and end with a grand set of studies of which the first is dated 1658, and the last, the latest of all the etchings, 1661. This is again a proof how independent of each other were Rembrandt's work in paint and in black-and-white.

B. 199, the 'Woman at the Bath, with her Hat beside Her,' is pronounced in the British Museum *Guide* of 1899, 'perhaps the most masterly of all Rembrandt's studies of the nude,' and von Seidlitz calls it 'meisterhaft in der Darstellung schmiegsamer Gliedmassen und pulsierenden Lebens.' The 'Woman by the Stove,' B. 198, of the same year 1658, is remarkable for the number of its states, due to alterations by the artist. The model is the same as in B. 199, and B. 200 is another study from her.[1] We are inclined also to see the same figure in the so-called 'Negress Lying Down' of 1658. B. 205. The flesh, it is true, is quite dark, but this may be only a piece of artistic effect. A negress's skin would be shiny, and the type of form, especially in the gluteal region,

1 See ante, p. 146.

would be quite different. The pose is not so very unlike that of the 'Venus' by Velasquez.

Rembrandt employed these fine studies for a 'Jupiter and Antiope' of 1659, B. 203, a later version of the 'Jupiter and Danaë' of c. 1631. The composition here is partly taken from Correggio's famous 'Antiope' of the Salon Carré in the Louvre, and partly from an etching by An. Carracci. The face of the satyr is a very powerful study.

Lastly, in the 'Woman with the Arrow,' of 1661, B. 202, Plate 28, we find ourselves, as is so often the case, in presence of a work so learned and masterly but withal so simple, that criticism is abashed, and we surrender ourselves before the mighty genius who has opened for us the secrets of art. Rembrandt laid aside the etching needle just when he had arrived at the very summit of his achievement.

The extensive series of figure-subjects from the Old and New Testaments have been reserved till the last. They number nearly seventy etchings, and cover the whole of the master's career. We have referred to some early pieces of small pretension, and to the large but uninteresting New Testament etchings of 1632–6 probably executed by pupils, and have seen Rembrandt's genius bursting forth in the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds' of 1634, like the heavenly apparition itself.

Selecting the most characteristic pieces of the subsequent periods we find that they fall generally into two classes. One set, belonging to the later thirties and the

PLATE 28.—THE WOMAN WITH THE ARROW
ETCHING, B. 202

To face p. 176

forties, has a more or less finished and pictorial character, which shows itself sometimes in a fully worked-out composition of light-and-shade: at other times in a thoughtful building-up of the impression of a scene by grouping, contrast of types, gesture, and facial expression; or again in cautious and careful execution of details. Thus, 'Joseph relating his Dream,' 1638, B. 37, and the 'Triumph of Mordecai,' c. 1640, B. 40, are full of delicate and spirited work in the heads which are of contrasted types and expressions; the 'Small Lazarus,' 1642, B. 72, and the 'Procession to the Tomb,' 1645, B. 84, are marked by pictorial interest and by true feeling, the latter, though an unpretentious little piece, is really one of the most moving representations of the subject in art.

The masterpiece among these religious etchings, that mark the artist's early maturity, is the large and elaborate plate of the 'Death of Mary,' B. 99. It is dated 1639, and is one of Rembrandt's most thoughtfully designed, and, in detail, most studied works. The effect of light-and-shade is by no means powerful, and a bright and silvery tone pervades the whole. It is essentially a drawing, inviting our attention to details, and claiming our recognition of the thought and care that have brought all these details together and made them severally contribute towards the impression of the scene. In a vast room, the perspective of which does not seem quite steady, on a canopied bed, that does duty also for the 'Danaë' at St. Petersburg, the mother of Christ lies dying, surrounded by the disciples and by other figures that might be present at such a scene. The moment

chosen is that at which the spirit has just taken wing. A cloud, in which are suggested angel forms, fills the upper spaces of the apartment, and the mortals below are all displaying in carefully schooled actions, gestures, or expressions, the feelings that move them. Peter has leant forward and with one hand behind the pillow to raise the fainting head applies to the nostrils a stimulating drug. The Jew physician feels for the flutter of the pulse, and on the other side of the bed the priest, a calm and stately figure, stands looking down on the scene. Near him at a table a lector, who has been reading from a sacred folio, looks up suddenly, silenced, from the page. A woman leans against a bed-post at the foot of the couch in attitude of anguish. Beyond her St. John, a youthful and graceful form, spreads his arms and throws back his head in despair. Other subsidiary figures are playing their appropriate parts in the scene. A person who is seen entering the room through half-closed curtains is motioned back by an attendant seated on the daïs of the bed. The execution is light but effective, the touch varied; and there is an indescribable glamour over the piece, which makes it one of the most attractive of the etched compositions.

A contemporary etching, B. 49, somewhat similar in character but not nearly so elaborate, is of importance from another point of view. The reference is to the 'Presentation in the Temple,' in broad format, of c. 1639. This composition is not so studied nor so delicately worked-out as the 'Death of the Virgin' but it reminds us immediately of B. 74, the '100 Florin Plate,' for which it may be regarded as a preparation. The shape

is the same; the figure of Anna, like the Christ in the more famous plate, is isolated near the centre of the composition, and on one side is a group of figures around Simeon and the child, corresponding to the group on the left of B. 74. The background is dark, with the suggestion of a huge vaulted interior, while on the other side of Anna is a tunnel-like passage along which groups are advancing towards the front of the picture.

The '100 Florin Plate,' Plate 29, is commonly called 'Christ Healing the Sick,' but it is obvious that, though the sick and maimed are present, Christ's attention is given elsewhere. He is really addressing Himself to a woman with a baby in her arms who stands nearly in front of Him, and this fact gives the key to the idea of the piece. It is intended as an illustration of the 19th chapter of St. Matthew, and in the spirit of the composition of the 'Death of the Virgin' a large number of figures have been brought together, and each has been drilled to act his or her part in a somewhat complicated ensemble. In the 'Death,' though the attention of all the actors is focussed on a single point, we cannot help feeling that they are rather over-numerous, and that the artist has thought of too many things at once. Here in the '100 Florin Plate' there is no real concentration of interest, for the endeavour has been to illustrate in a single composition a number of verses describing different sets of people and different proceedings, yet the piece is for all that a unity, and that Rembrandt has made it one is a great tribute to his genius, and to his judgment in the selection and treatment of his theme. The figure of Christ is so well placed and so effective that it completely dominates the scene and makes it

one. The various groups, though their interests are different, are all brought together, in idea as well as in actual composition, through their relation to Him.

The etching is supposed to date about 1649, but there is every likelihood that it was begun earlier, and should really be brought into a somewhat close relation with the 'Death' and the 'Presentation' of ten years before. The background, though far more subtle in the treatment of its light-and-shade, is like that of the latter plate, and the resemblance extends to the indication of an arched opening, through which, it has been suggested, in the original idea, some of the actors in the scene would have been advancing. This background seems partly rock and partly antique masonry. Against it are relieved what are practically three groups. A little to the left of the centre stands Christ, who appears to be addressing with a gesture of encouragement a woman holding an infant in her arms who stands in front of Him. This illustrates the text 'Suffer little children . . . to come unto Me.' The words 'and forbid them not' are suggested by the figure of Peter (his head is somewhat like that of Socrates), who is trying to push the woman back. A little further off a small boy is essaying to drag forward his mother who also has a baby in her arms. On each side of the central figure is a well-marked group. On the left, that is on the right hand of Christ, is a wedge-shaped company consisting in two lines of figures converging at an angle towards the protagonist. These figures are partly disciples, partly scribes and pharisees, and partly bystanders. Among them is a youth very richly dressed who is seated with his head sunk in his hand in an attitude of deepest thought. This is obviously

PLATE 29.—THE 100 FLORIN PLATE. ETCHING, B. 74

To face p. 180

the young man who 'had great possessions,' who comes into this same chapter. It is absurd to see in him St. John. At the right hand limit of the plate is seen a camel, no doubt referring to the mention of that beast in Christ's words commenting on the episode. On the right of the centre is the third group, consisting in a crowd of sick and infirm people coming together to the feet of the Saviour. 'And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.'

The companies of the maimed and halt, for one of which there is a drawing at Berlin, show the fruit of Rembrandt's early studies of mendicants, but he has treated the figures here with that intimate human sympathy of which he had the secret. Throughout the piece the tact in the selection of types is only equalled by the spirit and delicacy of the execution. With the thought and care of the 'Death, it unites a powerful chiaroscuro in which earlier pieces of the kind were wanting, and is the most completely pictorial, as well as the most intellectual, of the figure-compositions here under notice.

A transition to later religious pieces which show very different characteristics is effected by the etching of c. 1652, known as 'Christ as Teacher,' or, from the name of a friend of Rembrandt, 'La Petite Tombe,' B. 67. To many good judges this is more attractive than even the '100 Florin Plate' on account of its greater simplicity and directness. Not nearly so elaborate or varied, it has the advantage over the greater work in that it does not look in any way 'made up.' The Christ of the 'Healing' has the grace of a drawing by Lionardo; that of the 'Teaching,' though rather short and broad in build, is more human, more manly. The

hearers, who are all of one class and are distributed on the two sides of the composition, are fresher and more convincing than those of the left-hand group in B. 74. Another difference is that the light-and-shade is bolder while there is less effort to round off the effect in pictorial fashion.

The general characteristics of the later pieces, as foreshadowed in 'La Petite Tombe' are force and directness. It is true that two of them, the 'Ecce Homo,' in broad format, of 1655, B. 76, and the 'Three Crosses' of 1653, B. 78, are large etchings noted for their variety of states due to the alterations in which the artist indulged himself; it is true, also, that some of them, such as the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' of c. 1652, B. 46, and the 'Entombment' of 1654, B. 86, are worked over till an effect of almost total blackness is arrived at, but even these pieces are wrought with a passion that puts them into quite a different category from the more deliberately reasoned-out pictorial etchings the series of which ends with the '100 Florin Plate.' They can hardly be spoken of without reference to technique, and will be briefly noticed later on in this connection. A considerable number however of these later etchings are sketches in line with hardly any thought of chiaroscuro, and are admirable examples of the artist's power of characterization, and his gift for penetrating straight into the heart of things. Look for example at the 'David Praying' of 1652, B. 41, or at the more famous 'Blind Tobit,' B. 42, of the previous year, Plate 30. Was there ever represented with more reverence, more intimate feeling, the Protestant ideal of prayer, than in this homely figure of King David in his nightshirt—the 'man of war from his youth' but the man too 'after God's own heart,'

kneeling by his bedside like a simple boy for his nightly devotions? The almost childish naïvety of the harp placed carefully by the bed for purposes of identification, is one of those touches of simplicity that endear Rembrandt to our hearts. As for the 'Tobit,' Charles Blanc has called it 'the finest print in the world,' and continues: 'The beautiful figure of Elymas, struck with blindness by St. Paul (of Raphael) is not more telling, more natural in its expression than the Tobit of Rembrandt. This blind man, between his dog that has roused his attention and the spinning-wheel which he has overturned as he hastily rose, is one of the most winning figures that painting has to show. Who does not divine from the old man's eagerness, his movements at once bold and timid, that he has heard the voice of his son? . . . It would be difficult better to express the gesture-language of a figure, for even if one concealed the head of Rembrandt's Tobit, his whole body, his arms, his legs, would still be those of a blind man.'[1]

How much more dramatic and convincing is the line etching of 1655, B. 35, representing the 'Sacrifice of Isaac,' than the carefully worked-out picture at St. Petersburg of twenty years before! The little 'Gethsemane' of about 1657, B. 75, with its eager sustaining angel and the infinitely pathetic form of the fainting Saviour, strikes a note that hardly one of the greatest of the Italians knew how to sound. There are two series of New Testament subjects all the prints in which are dated 1654, one from the early life of Christ, B. 45, 47, 55, 60, 63, 64, and another of scenes from the Passion, B. 83, 86, 87 that von Seidlitz singles out as belonging 'zu den ergreifendsten Schöpfungen

1 *L'Œuvre de Rembrandt*, Text, p. 18.

des Meisters.' The first series is quiet and idyllic in feeling; the second, especially in the 'Descent from the Cross by Torchlight,' B. 83, and the 'Entombment,' B. 86, highly dramatic, and powerful in light and shade. At the beginning and end of this 1654 group of etchings from the Life, that number ten in all, we find the large and interesting plates of 1653, 'The Three Crosses,' B. 78, and 1655, the 'Ecce Homo,' B. 76. With the latter, which is full of figures, Rembrandt found it hard to satisfy himself, and in later states took away a whole group that seemed to divide the interest too much with the protagonists. It agrees with the character of the later figure-etchings in that it is not very carefully thought out and is hasty and spirited in execution. The 'Three Crosses' is also so greatly altered in the latest states that some have thought that these are from a different copper, but the alterations seem curiously significant. In the earlier states, though the sides of the print are dark, a stream of light is shed from heaven on the crosses and the central groups. In the midst of this radiance is the form of the Saviour on the tree, Rembrandt's finest version of the theme, where the whole figure seems strained as on the rack, while the head still preserves an ineffable dignity. In the altered plate gloom has descended over the whole scene—'and there was darkness over the land.' When the eye travels from one impression to the other we almost fancy that the artist wished to give the actual movement of events in their successive crises. The extraordinary whirl and riot of the groups in the foreground of the darkened stage might even suggest the idea of the earthquake. The dramatic is carried further here than in almost any of the works of the master.

PLATE 30.—THE BLIND TOBIT. ETCHING, B. 42

To face p. 184

The whole Passion Series may be held to close with the remarkable sketch, executed a year or two earlier, of 'Christ Appearing to the Disciples,' B. 89, on which there is a visionary gleam as from the unseen world.[1] Here the Christ, of more than human stature and grace, bends down on the assembled disciples a benign but awful countenance, round which the mystic light is freely playing. There is a quality in the sketch that none of the more finished etchings really reproduces, and the piece is one with which this brief survey of the etchings may fitly end.

We have now seen that the etched work of Rembrandt is as remarkable for its variety as for its artistic and technical excellence. Almost all the classes of work represented in the *œuvre* as a whole are met with in the etchings, while one very limited class is met with there only. The reference is to the so-called 'free' or 'broad' plates, only five in number, B. 186 and 188–191, which in some quarters have caused great searchings of heart. A word will be said on these elsewhere (see postea, p. 275). The variety is just as great when we consider the artistic effects aimed at and the technical methods employed to compass them. It has been already indicated that a Rembrandt etching sometimes depends for its working on almost pure line composition on a white field, and at other times on broad effects of light and shadow, in which line counts for very little. There are plates in which the artist seems to keep as near as possible to the white impression of the untouched

1 Lippmann says of some works of this epoch 'his biblical subjects appear like weird visions wrapped in mysterious light.' *Engraving*, etc., p. 174.

copper, e.g., the 'Baptism of the Eunuch,' B. 98, and there are others, such as the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' (3rd state), B. 46, or the 'Entombment,' B. 86, where the piece is only just relieved from the total blackness of a print from a plate scored or roughened in every part![1] To secure the effects Rembrandt has in view all the resources of the line engraver on metal are called in to aid, and he even at times seems to aim at the characteristically broad effects of mezzotint, the invention of which belongs to his own day and country.

Always, or nearly always, Rembrandt begins a plate by the etching process, for there are a few, such as B. 192, the 'Artist Drawing from a Model,' in which he has sketched the design with the dry-point immediately on the ungrounded plate. When the plate was grounded with varnish for etching, he probably sketched the design on it with a free hand; the more orthodox plan of tracing the lines from a drawing he only seems to have followed, so Bartsch believed, in the case of the portraits. A drawing for one of these, that of Anslo, B. 271, in the British Museum, shows all the lines impressed with a sharp stylus in the process of transfer to the plate. After he had sketched or transferred the design on to the etching-ground, deliberately or in hasty fervour according to his mood, he would incise it with the needle so as to expose the copper wherever the tool had passed. Next the plate is 'bitten' in the acid bath, is taken out, cleaned of the etching

1 Baldinucci, an expert in engravings, notes this extraordinary range in Rembrandt's etchings from black to white, 'tingendo in alcuni luoghi il campo di nero affato, e lasciando in altri il bianco della carta.' *Urkunden*, p. 423.

ground, inked, and finally printed. It will of course necessarily happen that to an eye like that of Rembrandt the full effect is not yet apparent. The piece needs reinforcing here, broadening there; the expression of a face is not properly rendered; details such as the signature and date have been omitted. It is possible to cover with the waterproof varnish the parts of the plate that are satisfactory, and to subject it again to the acid to bite deeper certain lines or make other changes. This is however a troublesome process, and an artist could hardly help hitting on the device of deepening the lines or adding new ones with the steel point directly applied to the metal. Even when the result of the first biting has been in general satisfactory, some additional accent can be imparted by these nervous lines, which are specially effective when they have ploughed up a 'burr.' The use of the dry-point to supplement the etching becomes accordingly in advanced work almost a matter of course.

A technical examination of Rembrandt's work has shown that pure etchings are almost, though by no means altogether, confined to the earlier years when the artist had not yet realized the full resources of his craft. From 1639 onwards the use of the dry-point to supplement bitten lines becomes more frequent; and in many cases the work seems pure dry-point or graver work over a very little preliminary etching, while there are one or two pieces that are pure dry-point from the first without any etching at all. From about 1643 onwards the third of the instruments above noticed, the burin or graver, comes into more frequent employment. There is a characteristic difference in the manner of use of the dry-point and the graver. The former

is chiefly employed for purposes of emphasis—it is the invigorating life-giving element, and imparts strength and brilliancy to what would otherwise remain somewhat flat and weak. The graver, on the contrary, with its precise regular strokes that fall naturally into parallel lines, is used to broaden and simplify tints by diminishing contrasts, and is sometimes so employed as to make part of the plate look like a mezzotint. As it gives very fine clean lines the graver is also useful for putting in delicate detail, such as the modelling of the clouds in full light in the left-hand lower portion of the sky in the 'Three Trees.'

With regard to printing, Rembrandt had his own press, and the British Museum has a drawing of a later date that claims to give a view of the interior of his house with the printing press in a room off the hall. To what extent Rembrandt in printing from his plates would produce effects by partial wiping and other devices of the modern etcher is not easy to say. There are plenty of proofs from only partially wiped plates, but this is only a matter of accident or heedlessness. On the other hand there is ample evidence that, as Bartsch and others have believed, Rembrandt at times deliberately left ink on the plate, over and above what would adhere to the burrs. In the *Guide* to the Rembrandt exhibition at the British Museum in 1899 instances of it are pointed out, and the most convincing proof of all is to be found in the case of a plate, B. 50, noticed a little later, postea, p. 193. On the other hand, von Seidlitz seems to take a different view, and insists that Rembrandt was above what would be called artistic 'dodges' in printing, and was only careful to secure the

proper and ample inking of the worked parts of the plate.[1] Rovinski[2] is of opinion that Rembrandt sometimes produced a 'tooth' upon the polished surfaces of his plates by the application of flour of sulphur. The roughness thus caused would hold a thin film of ink.

Rembrandt was like all etchers particular about the paper he printed on, and at Amsterdam he was of course able to procure the best papers of outland make imported into the west. Rovinski, who in his Introduction quotes what Bartsch says on Rembrandt's technique and adds interesting notes of his own, suggests that the paper of a buff hue, on which many of the finest states of the plates are printed and which is generally called Japanese, is really of Indian make. Fine paper of China is also used occasionally, and white Dutch home-made paper is common. Parchment has been used in a few cases, but with unsatisfactory results; silk or satin never.

We come now to the question of the actual use made by Rembrandt of these various means of expression in black-and-white. It is unfortunate that though there are so many modern books about Rembrandt, the technical criticism of his etchings has hardly yet been seriously essayed. For this part of his work there is no treatment so intimate as that accorded to the paintings by Bode in his *Studien*, or by Thoré and Fromentin in the works already noticed (ante p. 3). Sir Seymour Haden, as a distinguished representative of the etcher's craft, might have written on Rembrandt's black-and-white as the painter Fromentin wrote about the pictures, but his Introduction to the Catalogue of the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition of 1877 is in

1 *Rembrandts Radirungen*, p. 15. 2 Introduction, p. xxx.

this respect disappointing. Dutuit's Introduction largely consists of quotations, while the work of von Seidlitz, *Rembrandts Radierungen*,[1] deals too much with Rembrandt's life and work as a whole, and even inflicts on its readers citations of that outburst of Teutonism, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*. Charles Blanc gives very interesting notes on the etchings, but from the general aesthetic rather than the technical side, and in the quite recent and very thoughtful essay by R. Hamann[2] less than three hundred lines of print are given under the heading 'die Technik.' Some of the earliest writers on the subject, notably Bartsch,[3] and the Chevalier de Claussin,[4] attempted to particularize the different processes the traces of which can be detected in the etchings.

The pure etched work of the earlier period has a charm all its own. 'These prints,' writes Charles Blanc, 'show the utmost freedom and lightness of hand; later on the painter will labour more over his work, and treat his etchings like pictures, laying out great masses of shadow, and covering spaces with burin work as if with a wash of pigment. In his youth Rembrandt worked as all true etchers should, with mind all alert, and with as few strokes as possible, so that the fire should not have time to cool.'[5] The delicacy of some early pieces, light and silvery in effect, is charming. Examples are B. 30, 'Hagar's Departure';

[1] Leipzig, 1894. This is a different work from the excellent and indispensable *Verzeichniss*.

[2] *Rembrandts Radierungen*, Berlin, Cassirer, 1906, pp. 329, with 139 illustrations.

[3] *Catalogue Raisonné*, etc., Vienne, 1797.

[4] *Supplément au Catalogue de Rembrandt*, Paris, 1828, Avant-propos.

[5] *L'Œuvre Complet*, Paris, 1880, Text, p. 26.

B. 33, 'Abraham Caressing Isaac'; B. 98, 'Baptism of the Eunuch.' In later prints, worked over in many parts, such as the 'Death of Mary' and the '100 Florin Plate,' the faces still retain the freshness and delicacy of the original etched line.

Bartsch and others have pointed out indications that in pure etched work Rembrandt sought for variety by the use of needles of differing degrees of fineness. Examples given are B. 19, 'Rembrandt Drawing, with Saskia at the Table near him,' and the simple and effective 'Six's Bridge,' B. 208, about which the story goes that it was etched for a wager against the time a servant would take to fetch from the village mustard that had been forgotten at a picnic. Six's country seat, Hillegom, is seen in the distance.[1] It may be noticed, in connection with this question of etching points, that for the remarkable early self-portrait of 1629 (ante, p. 159) a tool with a double point seems to have been used while some of the plain lines are a millimetre broad. The same double point has been used in B. 149.

The original etching is sometimes extended by again grounding the plate and etching additional portions. In this way the cloak has been added to the previously etched head in the self-portrait, B. 7 (ante, p. 161). Less often a second biting has been resorted to to reinforce what is already provisionally complete. This has been the case in that little masterpiece the 'Pancake Woman' (ante, p. 173) where the spirited design has been in this way improved. As a rule however such reinforcement has been entrusted to the dry-point that plays so important a part in almost every etching subsequent to the 'Death of Mary' of 1639.

1 Vosmaer, *Rembrandt*, p. 539.

It should be noticed, however, before leaving the subject of etching proper, that it is not only the light and silvery effects to which Rembrandt's needle is confined. In pure or almost pure etching we find dark and powerful plates as well as those which incline to white. The 'Annunciation to the Shepherds' is a case in point, but the most magnificent of the dark etchings is B. 50, 'The Presentation in the Temple' in high format, sometimes spoken of as 'in the dark manner.' Von Seidlitz pronounces this essentially an etching, though it is of late date, c. 1654. This is again one of those efforts of genius that would suffice of itself to place its creator in the front rank of artists. It is very dark, but in good impressions not overlaid with blackness, and it is pretty evident that here at any rate the effect is partly gained by deliberate manipulation of the plate in the process of inking. The lines are strong and have the even breadth of the etched line as distinct from that made by the dry-point. The High Priest is seated in profile to the left on a daïs, and Simeon kneels at his feet holding the child. The white beard and robe of the priest, the white swaddling clothes of the child, and Simeon's silver beard and hair, bring a sweep of light in an irregular curve through the centre of the composition. Mary, behind Simeon, and Joseph are in shadow. Beyond the daïs and holding the whole upper space of the plate is the form of the High Priest's attendant, whose uplifted right arm rests on a tall halbard-like staff with richly-wrought top. He is crowned with a lofty bejewelled head-dress, and confronts us in the gloom that mantles the further spaces of the interior like some giant of Teutonic romance. From his rich trappings and the cloak that he carries up

with his hand upon the staff there flash mysterious gleams of light. The mantle worn by the High-Priest is of richest brocade, and is handled in a masterly fashion.

A comparison of three impressions from this plate (there is only one 'state') in the British Museum, in the Print Room at Amsterdam, and in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem, proves that the device of leaving a tint of ink wholly or partially on the unworked parts of a plate was actually practised by Rembrandt. At Amsterdam the light parts are bright and of the same tone; at Haarlem they are uniform but not nearly so bright, and have evidently taken a film of ink from the plate; finally in the British Museum impression the tint on these light parts is not uniform but is lighter and darker in parts, so that the artistic effect of the composition of light-and-shade is distinctly affected. This is sufficient to settle the question touched on ante, p. 188. It is to be noted that it is a broad etched line with perhaps a tint of ink left on the plate or adhering to a 'tooth' gained by flour of sulphur, that has sufficed for one of the very finest studies of light-and-shade in Rembrandt's work, or indeed in the world.

The reinforcement of etched work by the dry-point, or the dry-point and burin combined, is of course very common in the work of the middle and later periods.[1] The dry-point is also occasionally used quite alone, though more often over a very slight preliminary etching. It will be well to notice first of all some of these pure or quasi-

1 The etchings of the British Museum Collection, which Rovinski celebrates as the finest of all collections, were exhibited in 1899, and were divided under three periods, 1628–39, 1640–49, 1650–1661. The *Guide* to the Exhibition is a valuable *brochure*.

pure works in dry-point, so as to understand the character of its operations before examining those finished prints in which it is only one instrument among several. Bartsch extols Rembrandt's handling of the dry-point, and says: 'Il est à croire que Rembrandt se servait d' une pointe sèche extrêmement aiguë, et qu'il appuyait sur le cuivre avec la plus grande force. La première épreuve du grand *Ecce Homo*, B. 76, offre des traits tirés sur toute la hauteur de la planche, et accompagnés de larges rebarbes. Ces derniers prouvent la profondeur de la taille, et la force avec laquelle Rembrandt savait trancher le cuivre.' Many of these long lines are evidently ruled, and the plate though one of Rembrandt's most interesting works is not so characteristic for dry-point technique as some others, notably the 'St. Francis in Prayer,' the Titianesque study of 1657 (ante, p. 167). This is pure dry-point work in which the form of the strokes, broad in the middle and thin at the ends, is very obvious, and, in the first state especially, the burr is so heavy that in parts the print is clogged with ink. The effect here is one of extraordinary vigour. In the first state only half the plate is worked, and the drawing of the gnarled tree trunk, with the light-and-shade on the crucifix and the rock, are unsurpassed. In the second state the plate was carried further by etching, but the strength of effect has entirely disappeared. The landscape, B. 222, of 1652, is also in pure dry-point, and some impressions are blotted with the ink adhering to the burr.

A beautiful example of a rather more sober use of the dry-point over a light etching is the landscape called the 'Gold-Weigher's Country Seat' (ante, p. 166 and Plate 5). The characteristic touches here are distributed over the

field with fine economy, each one serving its appointed purpose in broadening out the plain and extending it to infinite distance. The bold irregular patches of shadow caused by the burr come each in its place and are nowhere crowded so as to give the appearance of a blot. In the 'Hog' (ante, p. 174 and Plate 4), the additions made by the tool in the second state have the effect of increasing the strength of light and shade, and most people will greatly prefer the first state when the dry-point has been used with more restraint, and the effect is broader. Still more refined is the work of the tool in the exquisite etching of the 'Windmill,' B. 233, where the balance between strength and delicacy is exactly maintained. The work of the dry-point on the face of the 'Old Haaring' (ante, p. 171) is in the first state of extraordinary subtlety.

On the whole, when one looks back dispassionately, and from the point of view of art rather than collectorship, on the series of etchings in which the dry-point makes its presence very obviously felt, and compares these with etched work, or etched work only reinforced by a restrained use of the more powerful instrument, a preference must be confessed for the simpler, less ambitious work. A comparison, in the first states, of the 'Clement de Jonghe' with the 'Tholinx' (ante, pp. 169, 171) is instructive. The first is almost pure etching, the second, for a print of which a collector paid £1500, is vigorously worked over with the dry-point.[1] In spite of the brilliancy of the latter piece, there is something about the breadth and ease of treatment in 'de Jonghe' that fascinates the eye, and that grows more sympathetic to us the longer we look at it. The exquisitely wrought

1 Von Seidlitz, *Verzeichniss*, pp. 147, 156.

self-portrait, leaning on the stone sill (ante, p. 161, Plate 23) is one of the finest of all the plates, and owes very little to the dry-point. The delicacy of the handling of the face and hair is made of greater value by contrast with the more powerfully wrought embroidered mantle, which reminds us a little of the High Priest's robe in B. 50. The dry-point has added here some accents.

The employment of the burin or graver might with some reason be altogether deprecated, for its characteristic lines have a regularity and parallelism that are out of keeping with the freer strokes of the needle or dry-point. Rembrandt seems to have been conscious of this, and Bartsch notices that when he uses it for detail he tries to make his work with it correspond as far as possible with that of the needle. About the use of the burin in general Bartsch makes the curious statement that the artist employed it to give a specially accentuated touch in the shadows 'et pour produire une vigueur que l'eauforte et la pointe sèche ne pouvaient lui faire obtenir.' The plates themselves show that the contrary was the case, and that the function of the graver was to broaden an effect by giving a flatness to passages where the varieties of texture were too marked, and, as Charles Blanc has said, to spread a uniform tint like a wash of pigment. The most conspicuous instance of this last use of it is the darkening by its means of the whole central portion of the plate of the 'Three Crosses,' B. 78.

Some illustrations may now be given of the combined use of all these modes of expression in black-and-white in some of Rembrandt's more famous productions.

The 'Bonus' is a very good example both of the rein-

forcement of an etching by the dry-point (first state), and the flattening down of a tint (that of the background) and the general broadening of the effect of the whole piece in the second state, by means of a systematic use of the graver. Collectors note that in the first state the burr of the dry-point has caused the finger-ring on the right hand to come out a spot of black (*Bonus à la bague noire*), while in the second state the burr is removed with the scraper and the ring is light. The flatness of the background to the right of the plate has in the second state been overdone.

'Rembrandt Drawing at the Window' (ante, p. 162 and Plate 24) is technically very interesting. It seems doubtful whether etching plays much part in the effect. In the dress and background the graver is most in evidence, but in the first state the folds in the dress about the shoulders are emphasized with deep gashes by the dry-point, which with their burr produce almost the effect of stains. In the second state when the plate is finished the burr has been removed, and the strokes now appear as lines. A general breadth of effect, resulting in a silvery tone and a evenness as of a mezzotint, has been secured by reworking with the graver.

As a last illustration may be taken the '100 Florin Plate' (ante, p. 179 and Plate 29) which is recognized as a complete compendium of the technical processes Rembrandt had at his command. Here again a comparison of the first and second states is necessary for an understanding of the work, for in the first the effect is much stronger in contrast of light-and-shade than in the second state, which is the one usually met with. The plate was first carefully etched, the utmost pains being taken with the accentuation of the

various types, especially in the group on the left. The whole has then been gone over with the dry-point, which with its burr has secured a brilliant effect of sharply contrasted blacks and whites. The background, though it is not easy to see exactly what it represents, is boldly modelled.

In the second state of the plate, known by the fact that the neck of the ass in the right-hand lower corner is crossed by diagonal strokes of the graver, these contrasts are greatly lessened, largely by the removal of the burr, and partly also by the characteristic operations of the burin. For example, the dog in the left foreground, beyond this the little boy dragging his mother, and the figure of the rich young man above, are all in the first state strong in black-and-white, but in the second state they seem hardly more than outlined. The result has been that the whole group on the left tells out as a piece of drawing rather than chiaroscuro, so that Houbraken writes of the plate as if it were unfinished. So thoughtful however and spirited is the delineation, that this clearing up of the plate gives us back in one way as much as we had lost. In contrast to this lightly treated left-hand part there is bold light-and-shade on the group of the sick persons on the right. The background varies in different impressions, but it is generally reduced in contrasts by the graver.

CHAPTER VIII

REMBRANDT'S EARLIER PAINTINGS 1627–1642

Number of Rembrandt's pictures. The portrait study the most characteristic form; its importance and interest. The portrait proper. Rembrandt as painter of 'Corporation' pieces. His single portraits: Were they good likenesses? Subject pictures. Genre pieces hardly represented. Pictures from religious and classical story. Rembrandt's relation in these to his predecessors. His classical designs. Differences of treatment in the figure-pieces. Points noticed in design and in lighting. Rembrandt's treatment of landscape. His still-life pieces: his grisailles.

Chronological survey of Rembrandt's pictorial activity. His relation to his teachers. The earliest dated pictures. His first essays in the nude. The Hague 'Presentation' of 1631. The early Amsterdam portraits. Rembrandt's poses. His self-portrait of 1640. The Lanckoronski Girl. Saskia portraits. Religious pieces: the Munich 'Passion' series, etc. Female nudes, 'Susannah' and 'Bathsheba.'

It is the object of the present and the following chapter to convey a general idea to the reader of the extent and variety of Rembrandt's achievement as a painter. As with his drawings and etchings so now with his pictures, it is rather a succinct *catalogue raisonné* than a critical estimate that is here attempted, and the point of view is for the moment historical rather than aesthetic.

The total number of extant pictures by Rembrandt

included in the *Complete Work* of Dr. Bode is about five hundred and fifty. Certain of these would not be accepted by all critics, but on the other hand, as Dr. Bode remarks, there must be many genuine works by the artist still concealed in private collections, especially in Great Britain. Hence the number first mentioned probably represents pretty accurately his existing *œuvre*. The most characteristic form that his painting assumed was that of the portrait study. By a portrait study is meant, not a likeness, but an artistic variation on a theme furnished by nature. In these studies the sitter, more often than not Rembrandt himself or some one of the persons of his entourage, is, as a rule, recognizable, but is presented in an artificial, sometimes fantastic, attire and trappings, and posed and lighted for some special artistic effect. These pieces are of the utmost importance in the work of the artist, as his genius expressed itself in them with the most complete freedom, and we possess them from all the periods of his artistic activity. From the more general aesthetic standpoint they are equally notable. Without saying that no previous artists had adopted this mode of expression, we may yet claim that Rembrandt in his insistence on the motive gave another proof of his originality. The point of importance is that his treatment elevated dress and jewels and accessories to the rank of artistic motives of the first order of value. They were no longer accessories, as in the portraits or ideal figures of the early Flemings or the Florentines, but quite as essential to the artistic effect as the features or the hands. It was not that he troubled himself greatly about their details. A Botticelli or a Ghirlandajo dwells on the details of a

necklet or brooch in the spirit of a worker in gold, and from their exact delineation we may be able to reconstruct the object itself. At first sight the magnificent gold chains with which Rembrandt so often invests himself, or the friends who have posed for him, seem so distinctly wrought that we could model their links in wax, but a closer inspection disabuses us. The executant has carried the work forward to the exact point at which the detail played its appointed part in the artistic composition, but has wasted no pains on the object in itself. It is suggested by Bode that for all these clasps and pendants and aigrets and chains, which figure so largely in his work, Rembrandt had originals made from his own design to serve as models.[1] No evidence has come to light of the enormous payments to goldsmiths that such lavishness would have involved, and it is exceedingly doubtful whether for his artistic purposes Rembrandt needed so many different models. It is more probable that working, as he would always do, with some handsomely wrought gold ornaments before his eyes, lighted according to the scheme of the study in hand, he would in each case modify the forms as fancy suggested, and so make one model serve for a dozen painted similitudes. A comparison of Rembrandt's detail, even where it seems most precise, with the detail of such real precisions as van Eyck or Holbein, casts a most valuable light on the former's artistic methods.

One little piece of evidence on this point is worth adducing. Among the earliest artistic properties of which Rembrandt became possessed, was the plain steel gorget that he wears in the early self-portrait at the Hague

1 *Complete Work*, III, 4.

(Plate 10), at Cassel (1634), in the Wallace Collection, at the Pitti, and in various other examples, and in which he dressed his father for the St. Petersburg head. Now in a self-portrait in 1631 in a private collection at Amsterdam, (Bode, *Complete Work*, No. 548), this same gorget is worn with a broad band of gilded ornament round it, and this must have been added by Rembrandt in the way just suggested.

The portrait proper, the next most important element in Rembrandt's total body of work, does not belong so distinctively to him as an individual. It belongs rather to his age and school. As portraitist he is only one of many, and in the matter of the portrait group he is run close by his brilliant predecessor, Frans Hals. Rembrandt was not, like Hals, a great painter of what are known as Corporation pictures, and the reason of this is significant for his art in general. The Corporation picture demanded an attitude on the artist's part towards nature that was quite unlike Rembrandt's attitude towards the sitters whom he employed for his portrait studies. In these studies accent and subordination were the guiding principles, and the accent of light or the effacing shadow were assigned their places on artistic grounds, without any regard for the intrinsic importance, in a non-artistic sense, of this or that portion of the field. It was on the other hand the theory of the Corporation piece that all the members of the group would contribute equally towards the expense, and that each would be displayed in due prominence. In some of Hals' pieces in the Town Hall at Haarlem there is very little to choose among the positions occupied by the different figures, and the artist's tact

has availed to satisfy the natural *amour propre* of each without sacrificing his composition. We can easily imagine all Hals' clients paying equally and all being satisfied.

In the case of Rembrandt we are fortunate in possessing an authentic document relating to his most important effort in this department, the 'Sortie' or 'Night Watch' at Amsterdam, from which we learn that sixteen members of the company portrayed contributed on an average a hundred gulden each, but some more and some less according to their places in the picture (de somme van hondert guldens, d'een wat meer en d'ander wat minder, nae de plaets, die sij daer in hadden).[1] Such an arrangement for graduated payments and proportionate distinction is obviously unsatisfactory, and must have led to no little heart-burning. The differences in the positions in the picture, with regard to fulness of display and lighting, are enormous, and can hardly have been adjusted by any scheme of graduation. The piece is, in fact, treated like one of the portrait studies in a brilliant scheme of artistic emphasis and suppression, that leaves the majority of the company, if not actually in gloom, yet in a pronounced subordination to the one or two prominent ones that is contrary to the spirit of this class of picture. The work which holds deservedly a place of special honour in the museum at Amsterdam, and is Rembrandt's greatest effort, will of course be considered in its place; it is only mentioned here as evidence that this particular form of painting was not suited to his genius. It is true that there are other examples in this kind from his hand that adhere more closely to the established conventions, and by one of those

1 *Urkunden*, No. 205.

paradoxes that occur in the work of men of genius, the latest of these examples, the picture known as the 'Syndics,' at Amsterdam, is just as effective in pure delineation as any piece by Hals or van der Helst, while as a work of art it is easily the greatest of all extant achievements of the kind. The fact that the known Corporation pictures by Rembrandt only number four[1] is another proof that such works were not in his line.

Single portraits on the other hand, or groups of two, or in a few cases, more than two figures,[2] are represented abundantly at all the periods of his activity, and many of them challenge comparison with the greatest achievements of the painter's art. He is on the whole equally successful with the female and with the male sitter, and portrays the smooth cheek and gleaming eye of youth and maiden with as firm a touch as the deeply lined and expressive features of the aged. Sandrart however notes specially his life-like representation of old people.[3] and such strongly marked faces no doubt suited his natural style better than the smooth ones. Heads, busts, half-lengths and full-lengths are abundant, but perhaps the seated figure seen to the knees represents the most common pose. The hands are frequently entrusted with an artistic mission of some importance.

Houbraken indeed remarks that he seldom painted a good hand and generally in his portraits hid them in the shadow.[4] This is done sometimes, but only in accordance with the general scheme of light-and-shade of a piece. In

[1] *I.e.*, the Hague 'Anatomy,' the Dr. Deyman's 'Anatomy' at Amsterdam, the 'Night Watch,' and the 'Syndics.'

[2] In the so-called 'Family' at Brunswick there are five figures.

[3] *Urkunden*, p. 395.

[4] Ibid. p. 467.

very many of the portraits the hands are clearly lighted and are full of drawing and character.

In these portraits proper we never see fanciful costuming, bnt the utmost is made of the dress actually worn by the sitter. A few of the portraits exhibit that splendour of attire on which we are feasted by Vandyke, but as a rule the burghers of Amsterdam went soberly busked, and black, a favourite colour with the born colourist, is chiefly in evidence. The wide collars or ruffs, that vary according to the changing fashions of successive epochs, supply masses of contrasted white with which the painter deals in masterly fashion. One characteristic feature of the costume of his sitters is of great artistic significance. Whether they are indoors or out they almost invariably wear their hats. This we learn was a social custom of the times.[1] The hats are as a rule of black felt with high crowns and broad brims, and naturally cast a shadow on the upper part of the face of the wearer. The artistic treatment of this shadow offered to the painter one of the problems he gave his life to solve.

Were Rembrandt's portraits good likenesses? This is a somewhat indiscreet question that can be asked about many famous painters of their fellow men and women. There are portraits that are among the world's masterpieces about which the enquiry, Did they really resemble the sitters? might receive a disquieting answer. There is no doubt a suspicious community of aspect about Vandyke or Reynolds or Raeburn portraits, and a far greater variety in the matter of physiognomy in those of some other painters such as Hals or Holbein. In the case of Velasquez

1 Valentiner, *Rembrandt und seine Umgebung*, p. 6.

and Rubens we can establish an instructive contrast. We possess from the hand of each a portrait of Isabel de Bourbon the gifted but unhappy first wife of Philip IV. of Spain, but whereas Velasquez gives us an interesting though uncomely countenance full of individuality, we find on the canvas of the Fleming merely the big-eyed florid country beauty, with which his brush has made the world so familiar. Rembrandt, who was one of the most subjective of painters, and was haunted ever by his artistic visions, would not be likely to individualize the sitter after the fashion of the clear-sighted dispassionate Spaniard, but he was still less likely to give any mannered rendering such as suited the more conventional art of Rubens, Vandyke, and the followers of their school. Rembrandt's portraits would be studied freshly each for itself and would be likenesses, but only in so far as they did not seem to offer themselves as artistic studies. Under the inspiration of some artistic thought there might come into play that variation in local colour, that emphasis or effacement, which would detract from absolute likeness while it raised the piece in the scale of works of art. In the portraits of the members of his entourage we have seen him comparatively careless of exact resemblance, but then these were almost always of the nature of artistic studies.

Even in the case of Saskia, Bode admits that her hair varies in the pictures from light red to dark brown, and her eyes from brown to blue, though curiously enough he identifies Saskia portraits by this very hair and these very eyes.[1] Of one portrait commissioned from Rembrandt late in his career we know that it did not satisfy his client as a

[1] *Complete Work*, III, 2; cf. III, 67.

likeness, and that trouble thereupon ensued.[1] In the same building at Amsterdam that enshrines the picture of the 'Syndics,' there is a slight drawing by Rembrandt of one of the personages therein figured. The drawing is not at all like the painted portrait, and is quite enough to show that Rembrandt did not possess as a gift of nature that knack of catching a likeness in a few strokes, which is so common among the draughtsmen for our illustrated papers.

In one special respect Rembrandt's fidelity to matter of fact can be tested. He was not particular in keeping his subject of the right age. His famous portrait of Jan Six, in the Six Collection at Amsterdam, makes the future burgomaster look at least two decades older than his actual years. His own self-portraits are sometimes puzzling in that they do not make him look the right age. The 'Titus,' if Titus it be, of the van der Hoop 'Jewish Bride' looks much too old. It may be worth recording that the French writer of the seventeenth century, de Piles, who knew Rembrandt's works, says that from the dated self-portraits among the etchings it is easy to see that 'he was born with the century.' This means that they made him look to de Piles five or six years older than he actually was.

A third important class of Rembrandt's pictures comprises the subject pieces which may be subdivided under the two main headings—religious and classical. A third section, scenes from ordinary life, should for the sake of completeness be added, though these, we have seen, are very rare (ante, p. 139), and in many cases a motive, which

1 *Oud Holland*, XVII, 2.

seems at first sight to belong to the region of 'genre,' is in reality drawn from classical or scriptural fable.

A 'genre' piece is not only one in which the subject is from ordinary human life, but one in which the representation of the subject in itself makes a substantial part of the interest of the work. If the subject be merely made the occasion of an artistic effect the piece can hardly be classed under the head of 'genre.' In Rembrandt's work, a genuine piece of genre may be noticed in the Berlin picture of 1627, one of his two earliest dated works, in which he has posed his father in the attitude, and surrounded with the impedimenta, of a money-changer. This is a traditional 'genre' subject in the northern schools and may be classed under this heading. Another piece which might be so treated, is the 'Woman Weighing Gold,' at Dresden (1643), whereas the Brunswick 'Student' of 1631, and the beautiful Ny Carlsberg 'Student at the Window' of 1646, are really of the nature of artistic studies, rather than delineations. The motive is quite subordinate to the artistic idea.

In the choice of the themes in the first two classes, the religious and classical pictures, Rembrandt, as we have seen, follows the fashion of his time and school. What was said on the matter in connection with Elsheimer applies also here, for in this respect all the northern schools are at one. In the selection of, and in the method of rendering, the subjects the German, early Flemish, and Dutch painters take the Scriptures rather from the human than the ecclesiastical side, and Rembrandt's well-known predilection for the story of Tobit, or the patriarchal legends, or the Holy Family in its homeliest aspect, is by no means an original trait. That which is Rembrandt's own in the treatment

is the warmth and intimacy of the feeling with which the scenes are conceived and rendered, the sympathetic insight into the secrets of the human heart, the keen eye for all picturesque varieties of character and personality, the large Shakespearean charity that enfolds all in equal tolerance.

The classical subjects are drawn from the same repertory that was used by all the artists of the time, the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, as popularized in compendia such as that attached by van Mander to his *Schilderboek* of 1604. At times Rembrandt treats the same subjects as Elsheimer, Poelenburg, Bramer, and others of his predecessors. The difference here resides in the fact that, though retaining much of their own northern feeling, the painters last mentioned recognized the Italians as their masters in figure drawing and composition; Elsheimer's nudes, minute as they are, are studied from Raphael, and the conventions of the figure-painters of the Italian Renaissance rule in all their works. Rembrandt, on the contrary, though he knew and admired the design of Raphael and the Italians and suffers it on some exceptional occasions to influence his own, treats his classical themes and his nudes generally in a fashion characteristic of himself. Not only professed Italianizers, but sane and broad-minded modern critics who know what painting is, have been scandalized at some of the great Dutchman's travesties of classical themes. It so happens that Rembrandt's boldest challenge to the conventions in question is to be found in a picture that hangs conspicuously in one of the best known of all Continental galleries, that at Dresden. There, when

the pious pilgrim of art has paid his devotions to the Madonna di San Sisto and Giorgione's 'Venus,' he is duly shocked by Rembrandt's 'Ganymede,' which exhibits, not without touches of grossness, a squalling baby with his little shift drawn up from the chubby limbs hauled through the air by a colossal eagle. The piece is so pronounced in its defiance to orthodoxy that it dwells in the mind, and has come to be regarded as typical of the artist's work on these themes as a whole. This is however not the case. In some of his classical studies, as in the etching and drawing of 'Jupiter and Antiope,' (B. 203, and Lippmann III, 53), Rembrandt treats the conventions with a decent measure of respect. The 'Ganymede' is exceptional and its genesis can be easily explained. In one of Rembrandt's cleverest pen-drawings noticed ante, p. 142, we find portrayed from the life the same screaming urchin that in the picture he has christened 'Ganymede.' It was just a wayward notion of the moment to use the study in this fashion. The picture did not originate in any thought of the classical theme, but in a whimsical fancy of a possible use for an effective study from nature.

In these figure-pieces, scriptural or mythological, there are significant differences in treatment that may have a word. The traditional arrangement of small figures minutely wrought in large interiors or spaces of landscape, after the fashion of Elsheimer and his school, is common, more especially in the early part of Rembrandt's career. The 'Simeon in the Temple,' at the Hague, 1631; the 'Preaching of John the Baptist,' a beautiful grisaille at Berlin, c. 1635; 'Mary and

Elizabeth,' at Grosvenor House, 1640; the 'Woman taken in Adultery,' at the National Gallery, 1644; the 'Flight into Egypt,' Dublin, 1647; the 'Adoration of the Magi,' at Buckingham Palace, 1657, are examples from religious themes, while the early 'Rapes' of Proserpina and Europa, Berlin, and Princesse de Broglie, Paris; with 'Diana and Callisto,' Prince Salm Salm, Anholt, represent classical subjects. The delicacy of the execution on the minute scale of the figures is in some of these pieces astonishing, while the ample space around them affords an opportunity for a generalized treatment of architecture or landscape, in which Rembrandt's imaginative power finds full scope.

The small picture, with figures of proportionate size and no superfluity of background, represents another subclass of his work. It is one that appears singularly well fitted to Rembrandt's genius, which does not seem cramped by the narrow dimensions, but expresses itself therein with characteristic amplitude both in design and colouring. As is perhaps natural, these small pictures are more common in the earlier periods, though Lord Spencer's beautiful 'Circumcision,' measuring about 21 by 28 inches, is said by Smith to be dated 1661.[1] The Scriptural themes are well represented in this *format* by the 'Labourers in the Vineyard,' at St. Petersburg, postea, p. 306f., and Plate 39, and the often-mentioned 'Passion' scenes at Munich; the classical by the 'Philemon and Baucis,' Yerkes collection, New York, of 1658. Most charming perhaps of all the works in this category are those dealing with the story of Tobit, the intimate human interest of

1 Bode accepts this date. *Complete Work*, VII, 13.

which is most suitably expressed on the limited scale. That in the collection of Sir Francis Cook at Richmond, 1650, which shows the blind old man seated by the fire in an attitude full of that simple pathos of which Rembrandt held the secret, with the wife spinning near the window; and the Berlin example of 1645, No. 805, are particularly attractive, while the 'Departure of the Angel' in the Louvre (1637) is the best known.

Among the numerous and important figure-pieces painted life-size, those in which the personages are seen to half-length are more typical than those presenting a whole-length view. This we have seen to be the case also with the portraits, among which the half-length size prevails. Though we have here masterpieces like the St. Petersburg 'Abraham entertaining the Angels,' and the 'Unfaithful Servant' in the Wallace collection, of about 1650, with the beautiful 'Blessing of Jacob' at Cassel, of 1656, yet the category happens to contain many of the least pleasing of Rembrandt's designs. The 'Samson threatening his Father-in-Law,' Berlin, 1635, and 'Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery,' Weber collection, Hamburg, c. 1650, are not successes; while the two Berlin pendants, 'Jacob wrestling with the Angel,' and 'Moses breaking the Tables of the Law,' of about 1660, are positive failures.

The 'Holy Family' at Munich of 1631 is important as the first life-sized full-length in Rembrandt's *œuvre*. The 'Sacrifice of Isaac,' at the Hermitage, 1635; the 'Blinding of Samson,' 1636, now in the Städel Institute at Frankfort; the noble 'Sacrifice of Manoah,' at Dresden, 1641 (Plate 20), belong to the middle

period, and the 'Return of the Prodigal,' at the Hermitage, brings an example from the master's latest year.

From the point of view of design there is to be noticed at different periods a tendency to over-vehemence of action which leads in the direction of the theatrical. In some of the earliest figure-pieces such as the 'Samson and Delilah,' in the Museum, Berlin, 1628, or the St. Petersburg 'Incredulity of St. Thomas,' 1634, it strikes us that the young painter is 'forcing the note' as a result of youthful earnestness; while in some of the later instances, like the 'Blinding of Samson,' there appears to be an effort to emulate Rubens. Rembrandt's natural style in figure compositions is much quieter, and he is always more successful when there is no such obvious straining after effect. In the portrait groups the same difference is of course patent in the case of the 'Night Watch' and the 'Syndics.'

With this idiosyncrasy in the matter of design, may be connected the tendency at times to those forced effects of lighting which figure so largely in the popular view of Rembrandt's art. The scheme of lighting in his pictures and etchings is often quiet enough, but it is also in a great number of instances quite abnormal and Rembrandtesque. A brief analysis of some of Rembrandt's schemes of lighting may be of interest.

It was noticed in an earlier chapter (ante, p. 25), that Rembrandt's intuition of nature was impressionist, in that in many, though not in all, his works he focussed attention on a central point, the objects which surrounded this being represented as they would be seen in nature in a

more or less indistinct and summary fashion. In accordance with this manner of seeing nature he adopted at times a scheme of lighting in which the central point was strongly illumined, the objects round being more or less swathed in shadow.[1] This lighting might be arbitrary, or it might be motived by the position and nature of the source of illumination. It is very interesting to note the working of Rembrandt's artistic conscience in this regard, and to see him sometimes carefully explaining the Whence and How of the lighting, and at other times careless of material possibilities, and either suggesting mystic sources of illumination, or ignoring the necessity for indicating any source at all. It is only of course in subject pictures, portrait groups, or landscapes, that this question arises. In a still-life piece, or a portrait, especially when not at full-length, the artist is not obliged to show the mechanism of his chiaroscuro, though he should make it appear reasonably possible.

Among pictures or etchings which show the 'Rembrandtesque' effect of concentrated light, the Munich 'Raising the Cross,' and the Munich 'Descent from the Cross,' both of 1633, show a strong light on the central group without any visible source, but in the etching of the latter subject, B. 81, a pencil of rays is shown streaming from the sky. On the other hand in the St. Petersburg version of the same theme, of 1634, the light is motived by a candle or torch held by one of the figures of the

1 It is of course a physiological fact that the light reflected from the objects on which the gaze is concentrated will affect the optic nerve more vividly than the rays from the circumscribing area which is only indirectly envisaged.

group. The actual source of the light had of course to be shielded from the spectator, and this is done by the holder himself with his cap. This is typical of a whole series of pieces in which devices are introduced for masking an actually present source of light. In the 'Entombments' at Munich, Dresden, and Glasgow, in the early 'Money Changer' at Berlin, and the late 'Denial of St. Peter' at the Hermitage, there is in each case a source of artificial light carefully shaded by the hand of the holder of it. On the other hand the open-air scenes of 'St. John Baptist Preaching' and the 'Rape of Proserpina,' both at Berlin, have strong but unmotived concentration of light. So has the small 'Departure of Hagar' in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the 'Visitation,' at Grosvenor House, of 1640. The marked effect of light-and-shade in the well-known Hague 'Presentation' can be explained by the assumption of a window high up and out of the picture to the left. A mystic emanation of light from a sacred form is traditionally admissible, and Rembrandt does not reject the device. The 'Incredulity of St. Thomas' at the Hermitage, already adduced as an example of forced gesture, is lighted after this fashion from the central figure.

It is noteworthy that in the two versions of the 'Adoration of the Shepherds' at London and Munich, though the artist has reproduced Correggio's famous effect of lighting in 'La Notte' at Dresden, he has rationalized the mystic radiance by making it proceed from a lamp held by Joseph and masked from the spectator by a kneeling figure in the foreground. The catalogue of the National Gallery says that the light is, like Correggio's, 'supernatural,' but in the 'Adoration' of the same date, 1646, at Munich

Joseph is shown holding out a lamp which illumines the central group. The group at London is almost the same, and here too Joseph's arm is shown extended though his hand is masked by the kneeling figure in front.

It is worth remarking that the three 'Suppers at Emmaus' differ in that the first, of c. 1629, is illumined by a lamp on the table masked by the theatrically posed form of Christ, and of the other two, of 1648, that at Copenhagen owes its lighting to a candle or lamp held by one of the servants, while the far more beautiful Louvre example is simply illumined by the evening glow admitted through some opening to the left of the picture. The different versions of the scene of the Good Samaritan show the same variety in the treatment of the lighting, and here again the finest, the Louvre picture praised by Fromentin, is in its lighting the simplest. It must again be repeated that these somewhat forced effects are by no means universal, and we have a large number of pictures naturally and evenly lighted by diffused illuminations. In the latest works Bode speaks of 'A subdued sunlight, diffused over the figures, and winning its luminous quality chiefly from contrast with the dark background.'[1] On the question of lighting something more will be said in a later chapter, postea, p. 267.

In regard to Rembrandt's treatment of landscape, it has been already noticed that we must include the drawings and the etchings if we are to obtain a true idea of his aims and methods in this department. The painted landscapes are not numerous, but one or two are among the most glorious pictures of the kind in the world. One of these

[1] *Complete Work*, VII, 19.

is the famous 'Mill' in the collection of the Marquis of Lansdowne at Bowood, another the 'Landscape with a Ruin on the Hill' at Cassel. On a somewhat smaller scale but conceived with the same power is the stormy scene in the Gallery at Brunswick. These are all works of the imagination similar to the 'Three Trees' among the etchings, and place their creator at the head of the modern development of landscape art.

It is not a little remarkable to note that some of the finest of these poetic landscapes are of scenes, or at any rate introduce motives, that Rembrandt can never have come across in person. It is very doubtful whether he ever quitted his native Holland, where mountains, and brawling streams, and ruined castles on rocky heights, are unknown. The motives of this kind which he introduced into his imaginative compositions were no doubt derived from the pictures or engravings of more travelled artists, especially those who had crossed the Alps. There are pictures and prints mentioned in the inventory of 1656 which can have given him these suggestions. Hercules Seghers's landscapes were especially well represented in the collection in the Breestraat, and this artist's fine picture of a stormy scene in the Uffizi collection at Florence gives us an idea of the stimulus such works would furnish to the imagination of Rembrandt. Apart however from the masterpieces mentioned above there are a few paintings, and a large number of drawings and etchings noticed ante, p. 122, that are treated in a quiet unambitious fashion, and are especially valuable as showing what a constant personal delight the artist took in the more homely aspects of the country.

The still-life pieces are as characteristic of Rembrandt

as any other classes of his works. We should have looked for more of them, but he made such use of objects beautiful in colour or lustre or texture in connection with his figures, that there was not so much opportunity for the still-life study pure and simple. The 'Dead Bittern' at Dresden, of 1631, may be regarded as a piece of still-life, but the flayed carcass of an ox hung up in a flesher's booth, at the Louvre, of 1655, is the most typical extant example. The latter is just as worthy a creation of Rembrandt's pictorial genius as the great portrait groups or the 'Danaë.' Other pieces of still-life mentioned in documents are not now known.

A word may be said on a class of paintings by Rembrandt that are closely connected with his etchings. These are the monochromes or grisailles in oil, which he executed in brown and white as studies for reproduction on the copper. It seems that in these cases the actual engraving was done by his pupils, the master retouching the plate. For example, one of the most important of these grisailles is the 'Ecce Homo' of the London National Gallery, which is dated 1634, while the etching has the dates: first state 1635, and second state 1636. This etching is one of those that does not bear the impress of the master's own hand (ante, p. 157). There is another grisaille in the National Gallery (and one also at Christiania) of the Pietà, and the composition recurs in the drawing with the numerous alterations in the British Museum (ante, p. 118), but no picture or etching of it occurs. On the other hand a small monochrome in the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow, gives the composition of the 'Entombment' of the pictures at Dresden and Munich though no corresponding etching

appears. The most important of these grisailles are the so-called 'Eendracht van 't land' or 'Concord of the State,' the allegorical piece sketched in celebration of the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, in the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam (ante, p. 42), and the 'Preaching of John the Baptist' at Berlin. This picture, which measures nearly three feet by two and is worked out with great care, was purchased for Berlin from the collection of Lady Dudley in 1892, and like the great 'Anslo' from the Ashburnham collection, that hangs near it, should by all means have been kept in our own country. There are numerous small figures in a wide landscape, and the scene, somewhat artificially lighted, is full of varied motives as regards both the actions and expressions of the figures. No further use of the composition seems to have been made.

A chronological survey of Rembrandt's pictorial activity gives the following results.

We have already seen, ante, p. 58f., that the chronology of Rembrandt's early life is obscure, and we cannot tell when he entered and left the studios of his two masters. We have two signed pictures from his hand dated 1627, and moreover, a more important fact as attesting the maturity of the painter, we know from Orlers that early in 1628 Gerard Dou, then a lad of 15, was placed as a pupil with Rembrandt, who is described as a gifted and widely famed artist. No traces of a direct influence on Rembrandt exercised by the first of his teachers can be discerned, for only one picture by Jacob van Swanenburch is now known. This is a representation of a scene at Rome, and is in the Gallery at Copenhagen. The subject is a procession on

the piazza of St. Peter's, and there are many small figures after the fashion of Elsheimer. The work is of no artistic merit, though of interest for its theme.

Of Lastman a fair number of pictures are known. They are figure-pieces from classical and scriptural themes, and show Italian influence, but most of them are positively bad, crude in colour, exaggerated and unnatural in action, and in expression unconvincing and commonplace. Three pictures in the Gallery at Brunswick, of which two are signed and which measure about four feet by three, give a good idea of his quality. One represents King David performing on the harp in the Temple, another the Massacre of the Innocents, and the third, dated 1609, Ulysses appearing to Nausikaa. In these extremely unpleasing productions, in which one is struck, inter alia, by the monstrous size of the hands, it is impossible to find any individual traits that reappear in Rembrandt's youthful work. Vehemence of action, the use of Oriental turbans and such like trappings, are characteristics not specially belonging to Lastman but rather to the school to which he belonged, and Rembrandt shares rather than borrows them. Only one picture signed by Lastman that is known to the present writer exhibits the strong effects of light-and-shade which were to appear in the early work of Rembrandt, and this is the 'Nativity' in the Town Hall at Haarlem. It is however dated 1629, when Rembrandt was already independent. Very few early pictures ascribed to Rembrandt bear any resemblance to the work of Lastman, and perhaps the only marked instance is the 'Baptism of the Eunuch' in the Gallery at Oldenburg. This may be considered to be attested as Rembrandt's by the engraving from the hand

of van Vliet,[1] but it is very hard to receive it. There is nothing characteristic of Rembrandt about it, save perhaps a certain painstaking loading of the lights on the dress of the Chamberlain and the foot and leg of Philip, while it suggests a painful reminiscence of Lastman in the harsh and livid greens of the foreground plants, the crude orange hue of Philip's cloak, and above all the large and ugly hands. The horse is almost incredibly bad.

On the whole it must be confessed that the direct relation of Rembrandt to his two instructors is not a theme on which it is profitable to dwell, and we may pass now to the earliest dated works which are certainly from the master's hand. These are not like Lastman, but are very characteristic of Rembrandt. One is the 'Money Changer' of Berlin, studied from his father; the other 'St. Paul in Prison' at Stuttgart; both of 1627. In each case there is great elaboration in the painting of accessories, and these show that Rembrandt had already laid the foundation of his future museum of artistic properties. The 'Money Changer' is almost buried in impedimenta in the shape of account books, folios, scales, coins, and the like, and he and his surroundings are lighted by a candle, the flame of which he is carefully shielding with his hand. The face and the accessories are painted with laboured precision but without harshness. The colouring is somewhat monotonous, but not, like Lastman's, unpleasing. The 'St. Paul in Prison' shows Rembrandtesque concentration of light on the figure, and great care in the rendering of details.

The painstaking spirit, lauded by Huygens, shows itself

[1] *Urkunden*, No. 17.

partly here, but more characteristically in the studies Rembrandt began at an early date to make from his own face in the glass. The etchings furnish us with many examples of these, and the experiments in the rendering of various expressions are carried out with the etching needle rather than the brush. The painted heads are rather studies in light-and-shade and colour, and the Cassel Gallery contains an early example (No. 229). Very soon the members of the painter's family have to sit for him and are dressed for their parts; the father (at St. Petersburg) somewhat fantastically with a feathered cap and the steel collar he wears himself at the Hague; the mother more quietly, though at Oldenburg with considerable richness, and often with a dark hood shading the upper part of the face, as at Windsor, an arrangement which becomes a common one with the artist in his portrait studies. Religious compositions, with figures on a small scale, represent more ambitious efforts.

'Samson and Delilah' in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, an early 'Presentation in the Temple,' in the Weber Gallery at Hamburg, and the early 'Supper at Emmaus,' date about 1628 or 9. The 'Repentance of Judas' so admired by Huygens (see postea, p. 278), belongs to the same time, and there are several others. The effect of lighting and the gestures are sometimes forced, but the artist is evidently resolute in his endeavour to grapple with all the problems of his art. The themes and scale, and to a less extent the treatment and technique, are those of Rembrandt's contemporaries and predecessors.

The 'St. Paul in Prison' of 1627, is followed by many studies of the same kind of theme. Old men models are

generally easy to obtain, and sit as a rule like rocks, and Rembrandt's first paid models seem to have been of this type. There are many studies for them as we have seen among the drawings, and numerous pictures, of which the 'St. Anastatius'[1] at Stockholm, of 1631, may be taken as an example, and this leads us to the well-known 'Philosophers' at the Louvre, of 1633, wherein this type reaches its perfection. 'St. Anastatius' is somewhat empty in composition, thin in handling, and cold in colour for Rembrandt, but there is no reason to doubt its authenticity. The old man is seated by a window in a lofty vaulted room in the large spaces of which the abundant light gradually loses itself. A bluey tint, common in Rembrandt's early work, is very apparent. In the Louvre 'Philosophers' there is far more richness and concentration. The warm greys and amber tints are of great richness and subtly gradated, but a quality that is especially Rembrandtesque is the look of peace and quiet meditation that the artist's sympathetic touch has imparted to the aged figures.

This first period of activity is the Leyden period, and ends with Rembrandt's removal to Amsterdam, about 1631–2. Within it must be placed a work, or set of works, insignificant in themselves but of great importance for the future. The reference is to one of Rembrandt's first essays in the nude, represented by a drawing, an etching, and a painting,[2] from a female model impersonating 'Diana.' On the whole, considering that the model was

1 The appellation is attested by a print. See *Urkunden*, No. 17.

2 The only instance of a subject repeated exactly in the three media, see ante, p. 113.

not a good one, the young artist has acquitted himself well. There are many uglier nudes in his *œuvre*, and we have already a foretaste of his essentially painter-like treatment of the surface texture and colour of flesh. The etching is shown on Plate 24, ante, p. 163. Within the Leyden period also falls the notable achievement of the first subject picture with life-sized figures, the 'Holy Family' at Munich of 1631. The human feeling of the piece is delightful, but from the technical point of view it is somewhat flat and wanting in intensity and concentration.

Of far greater importance as a representative work than any that have been mentioned, the Hague 'Presentation' of 1631 (Plate 2, ante, p. 18) may be said to sum up and close the period. It is one of the most characteristic of all the master's achievements, and if we knew this alone, we should have a good idea at any rate of some important aspects of his genius. It is traditional, in that it contains a number of small figures in an interior of immense spaciousness, but the design of the figures, the lighting, and the impressionist treatment of the spaces away from the centre of interest, reveal the individual genius of the master. The holy persons are assembled in a group in the foreground of the picture on the pavement of a vast edifice of Gothic architecture, with a vaulted roof, and yawning gulfs of darkness under the arcades. On the right a flight of steps ascends to a daïs, on which, under a huge and gloomy canopy, is the throne of the High Priest. On the steps and in the more distant spaces of the building there is a crowd of figures, but the whole interior, save the illumined spot about the central group,

is bathed in shadow, and it is Rembrandt's treatment of the architecture, half seen, half divined, and of the company of minute personages in various positions whose presence is betrayed by a glint here and there of the sparse and feeble rays, that gives the piece its character and importance.

Mary, for whose figure Rembrandt's sister Lijsbeth has done duty, kneels in the middle of the group beside Simeon who is holding the child. The Priest, an imposing figure in heavy robes, stands opposite. He is seen in back view, and may be regarded as an early type of the many personages *vus de dos* and serving as *repoussoirs*, whom we meet in Rembrandt's designs.

The removal to Amsterdam was rendered necessary by the commissions for portraits that the young artist began now to receive from the wealthy commercial city. We are fortunate in possessing a commissioned portrait of an Amsterdam worthy dated 1631, and executed therefore before his actual removal. The portrait is that of Nicolaus Ruts, and after several recent changes of ownership it has found a resting-place in the collection of Mr. Pierpont Morgan. It introduces a long series of male and female commissioned portraits, dating from the first years of the Amsterdam period, that give us yet another view of the many-sided artistic activity of the youthful Rembrandt. All these early Amsterdam portraits, more than fifty in number, exhibit in their general style hardly any of those qualities specially associated with Rembrandt. They are carefully executed likenesses in the established manner of the school as it is seen in the works of de Keyser, Ravesteyn or Miereveld. There is no concentration of light,

no sacrifice of delineation to artistic effect, no attempt at anything original or piquant in pose or expression. The sitter, shown at full-length or half-length or in bust form, is in an easy natural position, the hands, where these are shown, being often engaged in some simple action. The dress is the natural one of the sex, age, and station of the wearer.

In spite of this studied unpretentiousness in the works, they are in most cases attested as Rembrandt's by a certain richness of treatment and a soft though firm handling, to which the masters just mentioned seldom or never attain. In the so-called 'Coppenol' at St. Petersburg, of 1631, a man in black with a thick ruff is seated at a table with a huge volume before him that supports a paper on which he is writing. His pen is arrested, and he turns round to look at the spectator. No one of the Dutch masters of the time save Rembrandt would have painted the ruff so softly and with such delicate varieties of tone, or 'found the life' in the rendering of the book and the writing. How fresh and clear too are the carnations! The simple smooth treatment of the flesh yet lets us feel its mobility and life.

At Cassel there is a picture of about the same period which is supposed to be the portrait of the same personage, who is here represented as mending a pen. Bode is sure that the sitter is not the same in the two pictures, and argues that the big folio in the St. Petersburg piece shows that it is a scholar rather than a caligraphist who is portrayed. He has omitted however to notice that the Cassel 'Coppenol' has the very same book, with its strings, propped up on the table at his side. In the opinion of the

PLATE 31.—REMBRANDT, SELF-PORTRAIT OF 1640
National Gallery

To face p. 226

present writer the sitter is the same, but whether or not he was Coppenol is another question.

The portrait of Ruts[1] is not only the first, but one of the most characteristic of the early Amsterdam portraits. It is a half-length. The sitter is robed in a handsome fur-lined pelisse, and leans his right hand on the back of a chair, while he holds in his left a letter. The face is shrewd, the eyes piercing. One feels sure that here at any rate is a good likeness. A fur toque and a smallish ruff together frame the face, which is thrown up by a strong shadow, and glows warmly under the light. Ruts wears a moustache and small pointed beard. The flesh tints are full of variety, and the right hand, which is conspicuous, is carefully drawn.

Another early named portrait also in London is Captain Holford's 'Martin Looten,' 1632, at Dorchester House. It is treated in a drier and more precise manner than the Ruts, and is stiffer in pose. Looten also holds a letter with his name on it in his left hand, and this repetition of the motive of Ruts suggests the question whether Rembrandt was naturally endowed with the gift, so valuable to a portait painter, of finding for his sitters a variety of easy but at the same time characteristic and even piquant poses. It is not every great portraitist that has had this gift. Reynolds possessed it in the fullest measure and a good deal of the charm of his portraits resides in his perfect tact in posing. The Duchess of Devonshire with her baby at Chatsworth is a classical example. Velasquez was by no means so happily endowed, and we feel that his

1 The portrait is identified by means of ancient copies. See *Urkunden*, No. 49.

poses were a source of difficulty to him. Among the great Dutchmen, Hals was guided by unerring taste both in single portraits and in groups—witness the inimitable Cavalier leaning back in his chair and playing with his riding whip, in the Brussels Gallery, or his own portrait with his wife at Amsterdam, or the two groups of officers of 1627 at Haarlem. Rembrandt, on the other hand, was not always served by so quick an apprehension of the inevitable action and gesture for each of his sitters, and at times has had to think these out, with the usual result of a loss of spontaneity. When the work is really an artistic study in tone and colour, pose and action matter little, but in the simpler, more prosaically treated commissioned likenesses we are now and again struck with a certain stiffness and awkwardness in these regards. The Wallace Collection furnishes typical examples in the two full-length portrait groups of 1632, 'Jan Pellicorne with his son Caspar,' and the 'Wife of Jan Pellicorne with her Daughter.' In both cases some simple action—taking from the boy a money bag, handing to the daughter a coin—connects the figures, but these are at the same time posing somewhat self-consciously in face of the spectator and not in the least attending to what they are doing. The action that brings together the so-called 'Ship-builder and his Wife,' at Buckingham Palace, of 1633, hardly explains itself. The later 'Anslo,' the Mennonite preacher, who is addressing a woman at his side, at Berlin, of 1641 (see Plate 7, ante, p. 36), is much more happily posed, and there are of course very numerous portraits and studies of different periods in which there is absolute simplicity, or else some spontaneous gesture that is in perfect keeping

with the situation. The subject of the early unpretentiously treated portraits may be summed up with a notice of two examples, one of which is among the best known of all the master's works, while the other, in a private collection at Vienna, will be less familiar.

Every visitor to the London National Gallery carries away among his clearest impressions the remembrance of Rembrandt's portrait of himself as a young man leaning on a stone sill. It dates from 1640, the period when his art had fully established itself in its maturity, and is far more richly equipped with all the charm that painting can impart than the earlier pieces first referred to. It agrees with them in its simplicity and breadth but has all the quality of handling and colour, the lack of which the earlier portraits share with the likenesses of the other masters of the time. The piece, which is too well known to need description, is given on Plate 31. The dress is very rich but not fantastic, and the detail, such as the embroidery on the collar, is richly wrought with an artistic touch, without a trace of the dry and laboured delineation of the earlier works. Bode, who does not do justice to the piece, finds the colouring monotonous, but the carnations are very varied, and pass from the cherry reds to the clear greeny-grey half tints, through the golds and ambers with which his palette was always so richly stored. The modelling is splendidly firm but the light-and-shade more broadly treated than in many of his characteristic works. There may be noted a small defect, difficult to avoid in a self-portrait, that is often to be observed in Rembrandt's earlier work of the kind -the right hand is very imperfectly rendered.

The other example is the portrait of a young girl from the fine collection of Count Lanckoronski at Vienna, who has kindly allowed the reproduction on Plate 32. It dates about the same period as the self-portrait, and is equally serene in its breadth. Indeed so quietly is it handled that some critics have questioned whether it be a Rembrandt. Bode has however no doubt as to its genuineness.[1] The comparatively tame handling makes it all the more suited for illustrating this side of Rembrandt's art, and it has a delicacy and distinction which no pupil of the master could reach. The girl, chaste and winsome, in her close fitting brown dress, looking out at us so frankly with the air of a comely boy, has an indescribable charm like that of the antique 'Bologna' head, in which Furtwängler sees a youthful Pallas Athene. She looks like a maiden not conscious of womanhood, or repelling the consciousness in the assertion of her fresh young individual life. The broad 'Rembrandt' hat, which was certainly not reserved for Saskia alone, casts a shadow on the upper part of the face, and the lower edge of this melts into the carnations of the cheek with a delicacy that Correggio could not surpass. The countenance shows a purity of line in its contour that Rembrandt seldom gives. The dress is broadly and massively rendered, while the hands, of which each finger is individualized, are drawn and modelled with the utmost precision. It is true they may strike the spectator as more like a boy's hands than a girl's, and it may be noted here that we never find in Rembrandt's

1 Michel, *Rembrandt*, p. 271, says that Bode agrees that it is by Christophel Paudiss, but, in fact, both in the *Studien*, p. 467, and the *Complete Work*, IV, 39, Bode distinctly combats this notion and vindicates it for Rembrandt.

PLATE 32.—PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG GIRL

Lanckoronski Collection, Vienna

To face p. 230

female portraits the conventional taper fingers with their coral tips, that hold the fans in Vandyke's portraits and some of those of his master. Even the Liechtenstein lady of 1636, though obviously influenced by Rubens, has a Rembrandt hand.

Among women portraits of the early Amsterdam period those of Saskia take naturally an important place. Enough has already been said about them from the personal side. From the side of art there are two which should have a word. One is the study at Dresden of Saskia smiling from under her broad-brimmed hat with its green feather. The dress is caerulean blue, the flesh tints clear, and the whole picture tries to sing to us in mirth. The expression is however not happily caught, and the attempt to emulate Hals, which many read into the piece, has not succeeded. Hals owns few rivals if any in the difficult art of making a laughing or a smiling face look natural.[1] Is it because Lionardo's Mona Lisa is trying to smile without reallysucceeding that her expression is voted so mysterious? In the Dresden picture of Rembrandt with Saskia on his knee, Plate 11, ante, p. 72, a motive suggested by Hals has been carried out with a far greater measure of success. The other notable Saskia is the famous profile portrait at Cassel, the most elaborately finished, though by no means the most interesting, of the master's works. Here the face, in almost exact profile, misses a little of that look of plastic fulness, which Rembrandt's sense of relief enables him as a rule to secure. The piece is very full in colour, the hat with its white feather is a red between scarlet and crim-

1 A singing face is equally difficult, and Hals has succeeded here in his 'Singing Boys' at Cassel in a way that is truly admirable.

son, the dress red with a sleeve of Rembrandt's favourite green-gold deepening to amber and brown. The details of the dress and accessories are painted with a care that seems even a little meticulous. It is a very popular picture with frequenters of the fine Gallery it adorns, but it is not one of those to which the lover of Rembrandt finds himself returning with ever renewed pleasure.

Among the subject-pictures of the early Amsterdam period there is one important group that corresponds to the commissioned portraits already spoken of, in that a more or less conventional treatment is aimed at, as if the artist were bent upon pleasing clients more than upon working out his own artistic ideas. The reference is to the Munich set of five pictures from the last scenes of the life of Christ, forming a 'Passion' series of the kind traditional in the northern schools. They were painted for the Stadhouder Prince Frederick Henry between 1633 and 1639, while two others were added in 1646, of which one, the 'Nativity,' is also at Munich, while the second, the 'Circumcision,' is now lost. The pictures are very carefully painted on a small scale, measuring about 3 feet by 2, and are in parts rather cold and bluey in colouring. There is excellent work in them, but they do not appeal to the spectator with the directness and warmth of the pictures which have come as it were from the artist's own heart. Of these more intimate renderings of sacred scenes may be mentioned, as of this period, the two grisailles, 'Christ before Pilate,' London, 1633, and 'John the Baptist Preaching,' Berlin, c. 1635; the 'Abraham Sacrificing Isaac,' with life-sized figures, at St. Petersburg, 1635; the 'Christ and Mary Magdalen,' at Buckingham Palace, 1638; the small 'Holy

Family' of the Louvre, 1640, and the noble 'Manoah's Sacrifice' at Dresden, 1641, Plate 20, ante, p. 138. These pictures are noticed elsewhere.

Of much importance in relation to the master's work as a whole are the pictures in which the female nude plays the chief part. The motives of several are from the Scriptural stories of 'Susannah and the Elders' and 'Bathsheba,' and Rembrandt used as models both Saskia and, at a later date, Hendrickje Stoffels. There are two 'Susannah' pictures, one at the Hague of 1637, and the other at Berlin of 1647, and there are also painted studies and drawings for the principal figure, with sketches for the composition. The scene is always a rich oriental garden, with a palace in the background and in front a marble terrace from which the lady is about to step into a pool for her bath. The elders are more or less in evidence in the different versions of the design. In the Hague picture the figure, for which Saskia was model, nearly fills the panel, whereas at Berlin the landscape setting has received a sumptuous development which is in accordance with the importance that landscape had at the time assumed in the master's work. The 'Bathshebas' are finer as studies of the nude. There is said to be an early study with the figure half undraped at Rennes of 1632. In the collection of Baron Steengracht at the Hague is a 'Toilette of Bathsheba' dated 1643, and a very interesting little piece in the Corporation Gallery at Glasgow shows us Rembrandt in his studio painting from a model posed almost exactly like the Steengracht figure. Lastly we have the renowned 'Bathsheba' of the Salle La Caze in the Louvre of 1654, Rembrandt's masterpiece in the painting of the human

form, and one of the most precious examples of modern pictorial art.

Rather early in the period covered by these studies of the female nude comes a picture of surpassing splendour, the so-called 'Danaë' of St. Petersburg, which will be noticed on a later page, postea, p. 308f. It is a life-sized study of the female form in a setting of extraordinary richness, and is a landmark in Rembrandt's career in that it marks the moment of his maturity. Technically speaking it is of early type, but in all the qualities of conception and treatment it matches the greatest of his subsequent masterpieces.

The early Amsterdam period, with which we are dealing, begins and ends with works of capital importance. One is the 'Lesson on Anatomy' of the Hague that is dated 1632, the other the famous 'Night Watch' of ten years later. As these two pieces furnish a very instructive contrast, the consideration of the former has been reserved for the next chapter, where it can be treated in connection with the later effort.

CHAPTER IX

REMBRANDT'S LATER PAINTINGS, c. 1642–1669

The problem of the Corporation piece: the 'Lesson on Anatomy' of 1632, compared with the 'Night Watch' of 1642. Analysis and discussion of the latter picture. Has it been cut down?

The landscapes as characteristic of the central period of Rembrandt's career.

Rembrandt's self-portraits, especially as bearing on the question of the effect on his art of his misfortunes.

The later portraits and portrait-studies. The 'Syndics.' General characteristics of Rembrandt's work in the last decade.

We have seen that the determining cause of the removal from Leyden to Amsterdam was the receipt by Rembrandt in 1632 of a commission for one of the corporation pieces so much in vogue at the time. At the end of ten years, in 1642, he had again the task of composing a group of portraits, this time on a more imposing scale.

The contrast between the 'Lesson on Anatomy,' of 1632, and the 'Sortie' or 'Night Watch' of a decade later is a commonplace of criticism. The first is a typical example of what has been termed the 'conventional' style of portraiture adopted by Rembrandt at the outset of his career at Amsterdam; the second the boldest possible defiance of all the conventions of this form of painting, and the most uncompromising assertion of the artistic independence of

its creator. The 'Lesson,' at the Hague, is too well known to need description. It is one of many Dutch pictures of the age, in which members of medical bodies were painted in groups in a scene suggestive of their occupation and interests. A number of such pieces are extant, and a very notable example is preserved in the Hospital at Delft from the hands of Michiel van Miereveld and his son. The tendency in most pieces of the kind was towards elaboration of the somewhat gruesome accessories of the anatomical theatre. Miereveld even, though he has ably arranged his scene of a demonstration on the dissected subject and given due prominence to the imposing figure of the lecturer, has been unpleasantly realistic in details of the body. Rembrandt avoided this danger, and though he has shown the form of the subject, an executed criminal named Adriaen Adriaensz, at full length, he has so emphasized by his treatment the scientific interest of the scene that the attention is not unduly attracted to this necessary part of its furnishing.

The picture, Plate 33, shows the famous surgeon and anatomist Nicolaes Pietersz Tulp demonstrating, not to students, but before some of his younger contemporaries in the profession. He had commissioned the piece for presentation to the corporation of surgeons in memory of his professoriate, and Rembrandt justified his choice by executing the portrait of the professor himself in the best possible style. The whole expression of the figure and face and especially that of the uplifted left hand is admirable. Not less good in its way is the arrangement of the hearers. In the earlier examples in this kind already referred to, almost all the persons present are turning their

faces towards the spectator, instead of attending to what is being done or said for their benefit. This is significant of the aspect in which these corporation pieces were regarded. They were not representations of a scene, but collections of individual portraits, the scene with its furnishing supplying merely a mechanical link to bring the individuals together.

The fact that the figures as a rule bear numbers, corresponding with a list of names which appears somewhere in the picture, is a proof of this.

In the gradual development in a pictorial sense of this form of art, the separate likenesses come more and more to be merged in the general artistic effect of the piece as a whole, and the problem was how to secure this artistic effect without sacrificing unduly the individual likenesses. It has been noticed already how successful Frans Hals showed himself in the solution of this problem, and the 'Anatomy' of Rembrandt stands on the same plane as the work of the Haarlem master, insomuch as the members of the company are almost all of them duly intent on what is going forward, while at the same time they are all fully displayed to view in the diffused light which Rembrandt has been content to shed over the scene. In the actual grouping, as a matter of composition and of tact in motiving in an easy way any position artistically demanded, Rembrandt is inferior to his older rival. His grouping is neither masterly nor convincing, and this with the somewhat precise and timid handling, stamps the work as an immature, though, at the same time, an interesting and important production.

The composition of the piece will be seen in the repro-

duction. The pyramidal arrangement, which we find in others of Rembrandt's early works, is a rather too obvious device, and we are not shown how the figures are standing or sitting. In his reaction against the old tendency in such pieces to the multiplication of details, a reaction in which the youthful Rembrandt reminds us of Masaccio, the artist has gone to the other extreme. It is true that the vaulted roof of the apartment is made to show that we are in a dissecting room in the undercroft of the building rather than in a lecture theatre, but the scene is quite unfurnished save for the big folio propped up at the feet of the subject; this may be Vesalius and so give local colour, but it is one of Rembrandt's favourite artistic properties of the early Leyden period. The painter has allowed himself a little variety in the matter of colour by changing the normal black of the costumes for purple in the case of the man above the corpse's head and a less decided warm tint in that of the uppermost figure. He shows himself to be Rembrandt also in the fact that, though the light strikes the spectator accustomed to Rembrandt's work in general as evenly diffused, yet it is so far concentrated that it is confined to a circle embracing the heads and the upper part of the corpse. More subtle is the treatment, from the point of view of colour, of the carnations. In the case of Tulp and the two heads close above the breast of the subject these are rich and full, but the heads in the outer ring are much paler. That on the extreme left is quite pallid, the next to this is stronger, but not so full in colour as those just mentioned. The uppermost head of all is almost ghostlike, and seems flat and hardly finished. In these somewhat timid advances towards artistic treat-

PLATE 33.—THE LESSON ON ANATOMY
The Hague

To face p. 238

ment we see prefigured the Rembrandt of the future, while to youthful inexperience may be set down such obvious faults as the shortness of the right arm of the corpse. The handling is that of early portraits such as the 'Coppenol' of St. Petersburg, firm and precise. The head between the uppermost man and the demonstrator is perhaps the most interesting in treatment, and is very sympathetically touched.

The careful, and, as we have termed them, 'conventional' portraits of the early Amsterdam period, represent only a passing phase of Rembrandt's development. He soon returned to his more characteristic view of nature in which persons and objects were not regarded from the point of view of their individual qualities, but only in relation to an artistic scheme of which they formed constituent elements. Neumann [1] draws attention to certain portraits of about 1640–43, of which the much-admired 'Lady with the Fan,' at Buckingham Palace, and the 'Man with the Falcon,' at Grosvenor House are typical, that are not individualized likenesses, after the manner of the earlier Amsterdam portraits, but artistic studies in which the face merely takes its place as one of the notes, if we may call it so, of a harmony made up of colour and glance of light, and all the elements that went together to constitute Rembrandt's ideal of a picture. That is to say, as time went on and he became more firmly established in popular estimation as the leading painter of his day, he released himself from the self-imposed duty of thinking as much of his sitters as of his art, and treated natural data in the sovereign fashion which suited his genius. It was this

1 *Rembrandt*, p. 232 f.

emancipated Rembrandt to whom there came in 1641–2 the commission to paint another of the corporation pieces, in which he had achieved success in the earlier period of comparative self-restraint.

The result was the so-called 'Night Watch,' which, by the very fact that it has received this title, an entirely misleading one, betrays its specific character. It is not a night-piece at all, but represents an open-air scene illumined by a sun that is still high in the heavens, yet the effect of chiaroscuro is so forced that at the end of the eighteenth century it was supposed to be a scene in an interior artificially illumined. It is true that the picture had already by that time been considerably darkened both by the smoke and dirt of the shooting-company's hall where it was hung and by successive coats of varnish, so that to Reynolds it appeared 'to have been much damaged,' and he writes of it, 'it was with difficulty I could persuade myself that it was painted by Rembrandt.'[1] That it was a dark picture from the first is however proved by Rembrandt's own pupil Hoogstraten, who ends an appreciative notice of it with the words 'yet I wish he had put more light into it.'[2] The picture was badly shown in the former place of exhibition before the present Rijks Museum was built, and still kept much of its obscuring film. In its place of honour in that Museum approached through the somewhat gloomy 'Ehrengallerie,' it was not favourably lighted, and this tended to perpetuate the traditional

[1] *A Journey to Flanders and Holland in the year* 1781. *Works*, ed. Malone, 1809, II, 354.

[2] *Inleyding tot de hooge Schoole der Schilderkonst*, Rotterdam, 1678, p. 176, and *Urkunden*, p. 401.

PLATE 26.—THE THREE TREES. ETCHING, B. 212

To face p. 168

impression of the picture that there was little to be made out in it but the one or two principal figures. Of decisive importance for the history of the picture, or at any rate for the criticism of it, have been the display of it under more favourable conditions at the Rembrandt exhibition at Amsterdam in 1898, and the final removal of it in 1906, in connection with the Rembrandt tercentenary celebrations, to a new room specially built out for it at the rear of the museum, where it is placed low down close to the floor, and illumined by a light that on a bright afternoon is wholly satisfactory. The removal of the dirt and old varnish and this favourable change of locality render it possible at last to form a fair judgment on the much controverted masterpiece. It is shown on Plate 34.

There is really only one part of the picture in which the traditional obscurity still remains, and this is the central portion of the architectural background. Were this clear, the interpretation of the motive of the piece would, as we shall see, be easier than it is.

There is documentary evidence for the general character of this motive. Two copies of the picture exist, one in oils, by Lundens in the London National Gallery, and one in water-colour, in a private collection at the Hague. Both of these copies belonged originally to Frans Banning Cocq, the captain in the picture, and on the water colour is the explanatory inscription 'The young Laird of Purmerlandt (Banning Cocq) in his capacity as Captain gives to his Lieutenant, the Laird of Vlaerdingen, the command to march out his burgher-company.' This justifies the name 'Sortie' often given to the piece. It represents a 'going

out' of a company of civic militia, but whence and at what hour and for what purpose the exit takes place are matters not easy to settle. In the eighteenth century it was supposed to be a nocturnal watch turning out on its rounds by artificial light, whence the French name 'Ronde de Nuit,' and the English and German 'Night Watch,' 'Nachtwache.' The time is, however, certainly the day and not the night. The shadow of the captain's outstretched hand and arm is thrown by the sun upon the yellow dress of the second in command, and it is easy to see by the relative positions of object and shadow that the sun is still pretty high in the heavens. The 'going out' apparently takes place from the hall of assembly or place of arms of the particular company of the civic militia somewhere in the town, and the destination may be presumed to be some tavern or garden in the outskirts of the city where there will be a drill or a shooting competition, ending with one of those banquets represented in the shooting-pieces of Frans Hals and other painters of the time. In the copy by Lundens the middle of the architectural background is occupied with a wide archway from which the figures have issued, and though in the original no such opening can be clearly made out, yet there are indications in the group just in front of its assumed position that seem to presuppose it. One figure of this group, that just behind and above the form of the lieutenant, holds his long lance almost at the level, the next one, to the left of him, who wears a curious high-crowned hat, is raising his spear to the upright position, while the standard bearer holds his banner fully erect. All this seems to betoken the action of lowering the weapons while passing

through a roofed passage and raising them when the open air has been reached.

The captain and the lieutenant head the 'Sortie' and are by far the most conspicuous figures. The former is in black with a white collar. He has hose of a brown colour and golden undersleeves, while across his breast is a scarf of richest crimson trimmed with gold embroidery. The lieutenant, a conspicuously smaller man, is clad from head to foot in saffron trimmed with gold lace over a buff ground, and wears a scarf of dazzling white, with bluish half-tones. Behind and above these two, on the steps which descend from the doorway, are four figures, three of whom have just been referred to. The one to the left, the ensign, holds aloft the banner in blue and red. To right and left of the centre are other groups the lines of whose heads will be seen to slope downwards towards the centre, with the effect of securing still greater prominence for the two protagonists, while behind these last and between them and the group with the standard-bearer are other figures that must presently be noticed.

The movement forwards is not so obvious on the flanks as in the centre. On the extreme left will be observed a figure holding a halberd and turning his face towards the spectator. He is not in motion at all, but is seated on the top of a low wall that runs along on that side of the picture. On the extreme right a drummer in green is beating a drum of a somewhat pronounced orange hue, and beyond him a figure in black with arm outstretched is standing in conversation with a companion. These stationary figures are no doubt introduced for the sake of variety. The idea of movement is however taken up

again, on the left, by a conspicuous figure in red who is advancing, and is at the same time in the act of pouring a measure of powder down the muzzle of his matchlock, while a quaint little misshapen imp of a boy, his page, is running along at his side; and on the right, by another soldier also in red, who, as he moves forward, is examining the priming of his piece. Amongst the other figures, that are grouped with the more conspicuous ones here described, will be noticed two that carry bucklers. One is behind the man loading, and the other, to the right of the standard bearer, presents the appearance of a mediaeval man-at-arms. Helmets alternate with hats through the groups, and are more in evidence here than in any other of the numerous contemporary shooting-pieces.

The most remarkable figures are those which intervene between the foremost couple and the standard-bearer's group. To the left, behind the man who is loading, is the somewhat squat figure of a little girl, who wears a saffron dress similar in colour to that of the lieutenant, and carries at her girdle a white cock, repeating the white scarf of the latter. It has been suggested that the bird is the popinjay which is to serve as the mark in the forthcoming shooting competition, while the little maiden herself may be selected to present the prize to the successful marksman. The artistic intention of the figure is of course apparent. It balances that of the lieutenant, from which it is separated by the imposing black mass of the form of the Captain. Between the girl and the Captain intervenes a curious and almost grotesque figure. It is that of a lad, in a fantastic helmet that looks too big for him, who holds a piece to his shoulder and is discharging

PLATE 31.—THE SORTIE OR NIGHT WATCH

Amsterdam

To face p. 214

it in the air in somewhat dangerous proximity to the heads of the figures on the right of the picture. One man, whose head appears between those of the captain and the lieutenant, is putting up his hand as if to divert the muzzle of the gun, but no one else of the company is taking notice of the performance.

In justification of Rembrandt, attention may be called to the fact that in one of van der Helst's big pieces that hangs now where the 'Night Watch' was till recently displayed, a conspicuous figure in the foreground holds his matchlock levelled to his shoulder, with fingers on the trigger, and match blown up to a bright glow above the touch hole! If the piece were discharged, several of the most important persons of the group would be blown out of existence! Rembrandt has at any rate tilted up the gun, that in the 'Night Watch' is actually going off.

In the picture as at present seen, there is great variety in light and shade, but the faces are fairly well illumined throughout, and there are at least sixteen heads, exclusive of the drummer, that can be distinctly seen, though of course many of these are quite in the background as compared with the few more favoured ones. It is to be noted that the contributors to the sum paid to Rembrandt for the picture numbered just sixteen.[1]

The vigour of the work is beyond all praise, and every spectator will understand the exclamation of Hoogstraten that it was so powerful that it made all other pictures look like painted cards![2] A certain air of strain and effort is however unmistakeable, and is to be seen in the actions, motives, and costumes, some of which are forced and even

1 *Urkunden*, No. 205. 2 Ibid. No. 338.

theatrical, as well as in the light-and-shade that is too pronounced for a scene in the open air. It is the greatest effort of the master, but few would single it out as the most perfect expression of his artistic ideal.

The question whether or not the canvas has been cut down cannot be passed over without a word.[1]

The picture was first of all placed in the hall of the shooting company the 'Kloveniersdoelen,' of the second ward of the city, for which it had been painted, and in 1715 it was decided to remove it from thence and place it in the chamber of the war department in the then Town Hall, the present Palace. It there occupied a position between two doors, and we are informed by one Jan van Dijk, a custodian of the town's pictures, who published an account of them in 1758, that it was cut down to fit this position. This statement appears to derive confirmation from the fact that the two copies above referred to show more canvas beneath the feet of the two foremost figures of the captain and lieutenant, give on the right-hand side the figure of the drummer almost complete, and on the left-hand side exhibit at least two additional figures beyond the seated soldier with the halberd, who in the original now terminates the composition. The effect of this addition on the left is to remove the captain and lieutenant a little further from the centre of the composition towards the right, which appears an improvement, while the additional canvas below their feet seems also an advantage.

Against this view that the picture has been cut down

1 *Urkunden*, No. 402. Neumann, *Rembrandt*, p. 629 f., gives an account of the whole matter.

objections have been raised, notably by M. Veth, a well-known portrait painter of Holland and a Rembrandt expert. He considers that the copies merely represent a suggested improvement in the composition which occurred to Banning Cocq, and which he made his copyists reproduce. M. Veth has kindly informed the present writer through a friend that he has more than once examined the edges of the canvas in its present condition, and finds that the picture having been relined, this obvious method of deciding the question gives no conclusive result. He states however that an interview with the expert who actually re-lined the canvas fifty years ago confirms his belief that no mutilation has taken place. The controversy appears to be still open, and most people will probably agree with Michel, Bode, and Neumann, that the theory of the mutilation is on the whole likely to be true.

To this central period of Rembrandt's career belong his most characteristic efforts in the painting of landscape. Michel[1] and others have suggested that the studies in question were to some extent motived by the circumstances of his life. In communion with nature he might well seek relief from the pressure of anxiety and the sense of irreparable loss with which his life after Saskia's death was beset. The dated landscapes however begin in 1638, and in many of his subject-pictures before that time he had given great importance to landscape settings, while though some of his finest efforts come after 1642 they are really not different in

[1] *Rembrandt*, p. 310.

feeling from the earlier ones. In the matter of vigorous effect of light-and-shade in nature the landscape of the early etching, the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds,' is noteworthy, while for poetical quality it would be hard to surpass the landscape backgrounds of the two classical pictures with small figures, the 'Rape of Proserpina,' at Berlin, and the 'Rape of Europa' in private hands at Paris, both of about 1632. The action of the 'Proserpina,' in which the figures are contorted into the vehement gestures met with in some of the early figure pieces, takes place in a fairyland of blue-grey meadows and dreamlike foliage, while 'Europa' is carried off from a shore bordered with dark masses of trees, that, to judge from the photogravure reproduction, have something of the poetry of the classical subjects from the 'Liber Studiorum' of Turner. The background of 'Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen' at Buckingham Palace, 1638, with its effect of early morning light, shows fine observation of nature, and this brings us to the date of the Czartoryski landscape at Cracow, of this same year, that was exhibited in London in 1899. It measures only 18 by 25 inches, and is a little sharp and hard in delineation. On the right hand is a wood with trees of somewhat fantastic design, and behind them a darkly clouded sky from which however light strikes down towards the left, where is seen a broad shimmering river and a distant vista along a plain, with the light here and there caught by tree or windmill. The figure-interest traditional in landscapes of the school of Elsheimer is given by a group in the foreground of the Good Samaritan and the wounded traveller on his horse.

A similar contrast of gloom and brightness gives their poetic charm to the famous 'Stormy Landscape' of about the same date in the Museum at Brunswick, and the little Edinburgh study of mist-enfolded mountains sloping to the shore of a lake.

The Brunswick picture is a sizeable piece, measuring nearly 2 ft. 6 in. by 2ft., and possesses a wonderful variety and charm. The sky reminds us of Turner in the mass and the movement of the dark storm-clouds, through which a gleam of ghostly light strikes down upon the middle distance. Over the foreground the lights and shadows seem actually to be in motion as they chase each other over meadow, copse, and hill. What is shown is a simple enough piece of country, with rising ground to the left and a distance of plain on the right. The play of light-and-shade gives life and interest to the whole.

The landscapes subsequent to the momentous year 1642 are variations on the same theme of light and darkness, treated with still greater solemnity and depth, and exhibiting a profounder sympathy with the grander aspects of nature. The finest of all Rembrandt's imaginative studies of the sublime of the material universe is not a picture, but the famous etching of 1643, known as the 'Three Trees,' B. 212, Plate 26, ante, p. 168. In a certain sense the way was prepared for this in the landscape of the 'Annunciation to the Shepherds' of 1634, B. 44, Plate 25, ante, p. 166, but the contrast of light and darkness in the 'Three Trees' is not a supernatural outbreak of heaven upon the night, but a contest of the two powers in nature itself

with earth for the battleground. More quiet in treatment but of impressive dignity is the painted landscape at Cassel called the 'Ruin on the Hill,' Plate 35, which dates about 1650. The sky, dark overhead, lightens towards the horizon and carries the eye away into infinite distance beyond the point of the hill which comes in like a dark wedge from the right, bearing upon the end of its ridge the ruin that gives the piece its name. A close inspection of this ruin shows that it is the well-known round temple at Tivoli, that Rembrandt must have obtained from one of the numerous Italianizing pictures or prints in his possession. There is even a hint of the cascades, in a waterfall that he has indicated below the ruin. The town on the ridge of the hill, walled and containing a classical arch, is evidently Italian, whereas the foreground is furnished with a Dutch windmill and outbuildings, and the copse, the stream with its barge, and the more distant meadows, are all reminiscent of the artist's home. As is the case with most of Rembrandt's finest landscapes, the composition is as much made up as if it were a scene from Turner's 'Liber Studiorum.' It is not nature but a poetic rendering of a theme that nature has suggested. The foreground is dark and the light which sweeps along the meadow beyond the bridge separates this from the shadow that sleeps at the foot of the hill. The hill rises into light, and beyond it is the limitless expanse of plain and sky. The golden radiance of the evening sun seems to penetrate everywhere, lighting up even the shadows, and a sense of the homely joys of the inhabited world mingles with the sublimer impression of the vastness of the material creation.

PLATE 35.—LANDSCAPE WITH THE RUIN ON THE HILL

Cassel

To face p. 250

As an illustration of Rembrandt's range of power in landscape, it is interesting to contrast another Cassel study of 1646, known as the 'Winter Landscape,' with the background of the picture of 1647 at Berlin, representing 'Susannah and the Elders.' In the first we have a simple study of a frozen canal in Holland delightfully crisp and true, that resembles in its style the naturalistic etchings and drawings already noticed, while in the other the artist has drawn on the well-furnished stores of his imagination for the creation of a rich Oriental garden scene, bathed in the deepest and most glowing hues. To the year 1647 also belongs the very poetically-treated moonlight landscape in the 'Rest on the Flight into Egypt' in the National Gallery of Ireland. The whole *mise en scène* is here curiously reminiscent of Elsheimer. In the foreground shepherds have lighted a fire that is reflected in a pool which comes up to the edge of the panel. Close beside it are seated Mary and the child with Joseph. These are all on a minute scale and the rest of the picture is taken up with a romantic landscape Turneresque in design, but now a little inky in hue, that shows a castle on a wooded height, behind which the moon is struggling to penetrate the clouds. There are lights in the windows of the castle that remind us of a certain Turner illustration in Rogers' *Poems*.

Those who recall the Rembrandt Exhibition at Burlington House in 1899 will have a lively recollection of the noble appearance of the landscape of the 'Mill,' lent by Lord Lansdowne, as it hung at the end of the second gallery where it could be seen from an adequate distance. It is the largest of Rembrandt's landscapes and probably the latest;

at any rate it possesses that simplicity of treatment which marks in general the later productions of his brush. On a lofty platform, that looks like the rounded bastion of an old city wall and is laved by a stream, stands a windmill, seen against the light of an evening sky. A road on which are some figures winds down towards the water from the left. The foreground is very dark save where the river catches the reflected light from the heavens, and the solemn stillness of evening broods over the scene. The body of the mill is dark, but the sails, drawn as Turner might have drawn them, catch here and there the light. Nothing could be more simple, but Rembrandt has known how to invest the everyday elements of the prospect with his own greatness and poetry.

The course of Rembrandt's outward fortunes, from the momentous year 1642 onwards, is sufficiently known, but it must be repeated that such knowledge tells us little or nothing about the secret history of the spirit. So far as his art affords us evidence, we cannot say that Rembrandt's inner life was broken or perturbed by the loss of his wife, the gradual lessening of repute and of intercourse with equals, the financial stress and ruin. The attempts of some of his biographers to read his outward story in the art of this or of the subsequent periods come really to very little. His later self-portraits, viewed as evidence of mental condition, lend no colour to the sentimental treatment which is sometimes essayed. Here at this central point of Rembrandt's career opportunity may be taken to discuss briefly from this point of view the whole series of the painted self-portraits, which, numbering about fifty,

bring us face to face with at any rate the outward man in almost every year of his artistic life. With these must be conjoined certain of the etchings and drawings.

The early experimental heads of the Leyden period, painted and etched, are used partly for studies in light and shade and partly for studies in the mechanism of expression, but there are also, as we have seen, examples in which the youthful gentleman introduces himself to the world in as winning an aspect as possible. It is not easy to say how far this natural desire to make a favourable social impression is at work in the more elaborate costume-studies of somewhat later date; how far they are purely artistic variations on a theme that is only of importance as a basis for such treatment. The reference here is to etchings such as B. 18, 20, 21, 23, of 1634 39 (see ante, p. 161), and to the self-portraits, often in military dress or trappings, the series of which ends with the National Gallery masterpiece of 1640 (ante, p. 229). Bode has suggested that Rembrandt may have belonged to one of the militia companies of Amsterdam, and that this would partly explain how a 'swashing and a martial outside' so often presents itself for our admiration. This is quite possible. The social and ceremonial importance of such companies often outlasts their military significance, as is the case for example with the Royal Company of Archers in Scotland, and Rembrandt on his settlement in Amsterdam may very likely have taken the step in question. At the same time the glint of arms was certainly in itself fascinating to the artist's eye, and the well-known steel gorget with sundry Oriental weapons had passed into his collection and on to his canvases before he had left his father's house.

A small full-length of 1631, part of the Dutuit Collection now in the Petit Palais at Paris, gives us a Rembrandt in Oriental dress with a poodle at his feet, who looks much older than his 25 years. There is nothing psychological to be noted till we reach the 'Rembrandt with his Wife adorning Herself' at Buckingham Palace,[1] and the Dresden double portrait, both of about 1634–5. There a dignified satisfaction, here sheer jollity, give the personal interest to which attention has already been directed, ante, p. 70 f.. The other portraits of the thirties are chiefly heads. More than one is in the Louvre, and the Berlin, the Hague, the Wallace Collections contain good examples, mostly with hat and plume, with gold chains, with steel collar, and other artistic trappings. A well-known Cassel piece, 'Rembrandt mit der Sturmhaube,' of 1634, shows him in a helmet. These military insignia are of course mere pieces of make-up, and no soldierly air is assumed to correspond with them. In the Cassel picture indeed the head is pushed forward with an anxious, almost frightened expression that by no means suggests the warrior. As 'Standard Bearer' in the collection of Baron Gustav Rothschild at Paris, of c. 1635, Rembrandt looks the part much better. He has also, at St. Petersburg, got himself up so successfully as a 'Polish Noble' or 'Slav Prince,' as to deceive even the elect, for Bode[2] refuses to recognize in this magnificently handled portrait the familiar lineaments. It is true that the personage looks older than Rembrandt was at this date, 1637, but this as we have seen is no exact criterion, and the general aspect, the trappings, and

1 Called erroneously 'The Burgomaster Pancras and his Wife.'

2 *Complete Work*, III, 36.

especially the characteristic division of the end of the nose are not to be mistaken.

The National Gallery self-portrait of 1640, with its serene breadth and repose has already been noticed. It will be instructive to turn directly from this to two great masterpieces in English possession dating about twenty years later, the Earl of Ilchester's 'Rembrandt' of 1658, and Lord Iveagh's of about 1663. When these pictures were shown in London in the Rembrandt Exhibition of 1899, their effect was almost overpowering. There was about them a weight, a solidity, that seemed to crush even the masterpieces of the same painter which surrounded them. They illustrated the words in the Odyssey about Teiresias among the shades, to whom it was given *οἷῳ πεπνῦσθαι· τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀΐσσουσιν.* The secret of the effect was the majestic look of power in the countenance. The will, the intellect, were serenely established on their thrones; the man was conscious master of himself and of his world. (See Plate 36.) Was this imperial creature, we asked ourselves, the man broken, bereaved, impoverished, forsaken, which biographies of Rembrandt present to us? Was he not rather one who has put himself out of range of 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' and was already living with the immortals? The truth really is that Rembrandt's troubles, so far from leaving a deep impress on his personality or his art, seem to have had on both an effect surprisingly slight. This statement the self-portraits will be seen to justify.

A review of the later self-portraits generally, in their psychological aspects, shows us a face that in a physical sense aged prematurely. We talk of the Rembrandt of

the sixties as an old man, but he died at the age of three-score and three, when so many are still in the prime of life. Some of the latest likenesses such as that in the Uffizi of about 1666–8, and what seems the last of all, the picture lent from the Neeld Collection to the Rembrandt exhibition of 1899, betray a puffiness in the cheeks and a certain flabby look in the tissues that betoken physical decay. This only comes however quite at the end. Nevertheless for ten years before this Rembrandt had been ageing. The face, from about 1648 onwards, becomes lined, and the forehead is especially marked with deepening furrows. This imparts at times a somewhat careworn and anxious expression, which appears for example in the Louvre self-portrait of 1660, where he has represented himself painting, and ten years earlier in the richly painted likeness in fancy costume lent by Lady de Rothschild to the exhibition of 1899. Gravity of expression marks the Buckingham Palace piece of c. 1645; the simple and majestic Vienna half-length of c. 1658 (No. 1274); and Lord Ilchester's masterpiece; and the very late Vienna head, so magnificent in modelling and variety of colour (No. 1268). Austere simplicity of dress characterizes Rembrandt in Mr. Heseltine's drawing, Plate 13, ante, pp. 84, 115; the etching of himself drawing at a window, B. 22, so important as autobiography, Plate 23; the Vienna half-length, and other examples.

If all these facts seem to make for the more natural and more popular theory that Rembrandt's later art reflects his outward fortunes, there are other facts which point rather in the direction of the view here maintained that the influence, if discernible at all, was very slight. Rem-

PLATE 36.—REMBRANDT. SELF-PORTRAIT
Lord Ilchester's Collection

To face p. 256

brandt aged early, but it would be very difficult to say how much his outward troubles had to do with this. A grave, a lined, even a careworn face has been borne by many deep-hearted thoughtful men, who are advanced in the experience of life. Lord Tennyson's portraits do not grow jocund as he advances in years, yet he had few outward troubles to bear, and Carlyle looked all his life more melancholy than Rembrandt. The well-known National Gallery portrait of Rembrandt aged looks serene and almost jovial, and in what must be a remarkable head in the von Carstanjen Collection at Berlin, the old man is laughing at us. If a sober attire be more frequently worn than in the days of youth, we have the richest fancy dress in Lady Rothschild's portrait of 1650, and in the same year was painted the brilliant piece of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, in which Rembrandt has gone back to military ways and has displayed himself in the full panoply of a Landsknecht, with breastplate and big two-handed sword! On the whole the later self-portraits in general carry out the impression of the central piece of the kind, Lord Ilchester's example of 1658. They present to us the grave but serene figure of a man who has cast youth and its superficial joys behind him, and is bending the whole forces of his being towards the accomplishment of the task of his life. Whether friends and fortune stay or go is indifferent to him. He is like Michelangelo whose art was all the wife he needed or could bear, like Ghirlandajo who when he had won the secret of his craft would hear no talk of household concerns.

With the psychology and the ethics of this attitude of mind we have not to deal. What is aimed at here is to

establish that Rembrandt's art after 1642 shows no signs of break or confusion or uncertainty. It is stronger and richer and freer in technical handling, and in conception more serious; but the freedom and the strength are not symptoms of mental worry or passionate rebellion against fate, while the solemnity is that of a mature outlook on human life not of repining or hopelessness.

From the self-portraits we may pass to a consideration of the later portraits and portrait studies. We have seen that after the first two or three years of the Amsterdam period, when commissioned portraits were so abundant, these become markedly less frequent, and take a secondary place beside the artistic studies. Foremost among these, in the fifties, must be placed the studies of Hendrickje and of Titus, amongst which may be reckoned some of Rembrandt's finest efforts. On these something has already been said, ante, p. 86 f. There are also a very large number of portrait studies of aged men, sometimes in semi-oriental dress, of which the Duke of Devonshire's 'Rabbi' at Chatsworth, of 1635, is an early and very famous example.

Similar studies of old men, for whom the generic term 'Rabbi' is often vaguely used, occur through the later years, as at Berlin, No. 828A, and St. Petersburg, No. 820, both of 1645; at the National Gallery, No. 51, of c. 1650; at Devonshire House, of 1651 and 1652; at Dresden, No. 1567, of 1654; and again at Trafalgar Square, No. 190, c. 1657, and No. 1674, c. 1662; while the series may end with the 'Old Man with Pearls in his Hat,' at Dresden, No. 1570, painted, Bode believes, about 1665. Side by

side with these must be placed a series of studies of aged women, sometimes treated quite simply, and at other times worked up pictorially by the introduction of such a motive as reading in a big book. The most interesting set of these studies is made up, first, by three pictures at St. Petersburg, Nos. 804, 805, 806; then by a noble piece in the Moltke Collection at Copenhagen and a canvas at Epinal; and lastly by the 'Portrait of an Old Lady,' No. 582 in the Gallery at Stockholm. Here the piece forms a pendant to the portrait of an elderly man, No. 581, while at St. Petersburg a similar portrait corresponds to No. 806. The man in both cases is evidently Adriaen van Rijn, the elder brother of Rembrandt, and Valentiner has recognized in the old lady his wife Lysbetgen Symons van Leeuwen. One of these studies, No. 805, St. Petersburg, will be noticed in the sequel, postea, p. 276f.

Portraits however, which are apparently commissioned, appear from time to time in Rembrandt's work, almost to the end of his career. The Liechtenstein Gallery at Vienna contains brilliant pendants of 1636, of which the lady's portrait, in very sumptuous but not fantastic attire, has a good deal of the style of Rubens, and rivals for courtly grace the famous Marie of Taxis by Vandyke in the same great Collection. There is something of the same quality in the 'Lady with the Fan' in the Royal collection, and in the Duke of Westminster's 'Man with the Falcon' and its pendant, already referred to (ante, p. 239). On the other hand Mr. Arthur Sanderson in Edinburgh has a portrait of an old lady of about the same date as the Liechtenstein beauty that is just as simple as the latter is elaborate, and the same dignified restraint

characterizes the famous portrait known as 'Elizabeth Bas' of the Amsterdam Museum, dating, like the Buckingham Palace and Grosvenor House pieces, about 1642. Models of taste in the treatment of portraits, in a style equally removed on the one side from the matter-of-fact dryness of many of the early 'conventional' likenesses, and on the other from the often artificial look and forced effect of the studies, are one or two pictures of clergymen of this early middle period, such as the 'Swalmius' now at Antwerp, of 1637; a posthumous portrait of Rembrandt's old friend Sylvius of 1645; and especially the noble portrait or portrait group of the Mennonite preacher, Anslo, at Berlin, of 1641, Plate 7, ante, p. 366. Anslo is seated at his table and turns from it to a woman in the dress of a widow who is seated beside him, and to whom he appears to be addressing some pastoral counsel or consolation. It is one of those pieces in which Rembrandt has succeeded perfectly in a task he sometimes found difficult, and he has made the two personages live before us without in any degree verging on the forced or artificial. The woman's figure which is on the right is balanced by a still-life group on the left, made up of the preacher's desk with books, candlesticks, and other scholarly paraphernalia, that is painted with a combination of decision and melting softness that even Rembrandt himself has seldom equalled. Simple also, but extraordinarily effective, are the two portraits of 1647 at Grosvenor House, known as Nicolaes Berchem and his wife. There must not be forgotten in this connection the various etched portraits of known persons, some of whom were closely associated with the proceedings in the artist's bankruptcy, which

belong to the fifties. Of one of these latter persons, Nicolaes Bruyningh, cousin to the secretary to the Chamber of Bankruptcy, there is a notable oil painting of 1658,[1] at Cassel, the modelling and light-and-shade of which are magical. The same vague though indispensable word applies to the still more famous 'Jan Six,' possibly, as Bode thinks, of 1654, in the Six Collection at Amsterdam, which will be noticed on a subsequent page.

Some other fine and simply-treated portraits, such as the man and his wife in the collection of Prince Yussupoff, at St. Petersburg,[2] bring us naturally to the established masterpiece of Rembrandt's later period, the great corporation picture of the 'Syndics of the Clothworkers' Guild' at Amsterdam, that was finished in 1661–2,[3] Plate 16 (ante, p. 98). The work forms a third to the other two portrait groups already discussed, the 'Anatomy' and the 'Sortie'; and they compose a sort of Hegelian trinity, the first being primitive and unschooled in its simplicity, the second an assertion of militant independence, the third a return to a serenity that is the fruit of reason and of ripe experience. The picture, which on the whole represents the culmination of the master's artistic achievement, will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, postea, p. 323 f., but it may be mentioned here, as contrasting the piece with the 'Night Watch,' that it exhibits nothing more exciting than a business meeting of five citizens in sober black, one standing and four seated at a table, with their

1 Or, as others have read the date, 1652.

2 Exhibited in the Amsterdam Rembrandt Exhibition of 1898 but not in London.

3 Both dates appear on the picture.

officer standing behind them, and that the *mise en scène* of the piece is as quiet as are the gestures and expressions of the actors. How Rembrandt has succeeded in creating out of these simple elements one of the greatest pictures in the world will form the subject of future consideration.

The 'Syndics' brings us to the last decade of Rembrandt's life, and to a series of works which are in general characterized at once by simplicity and breadth in presentment, by spiritual depth, and by strength and richness in handling and colour. 'In general' is said, because some few of the later pieces are poor, or careless, or ungainly, but the really representative works which dominate the decade are ennobled by the qualities just enumerated. The secret of the simplicity is the comparative restraint in what may be called the material apparatus of the picture. The reference is to motives, poses, gestures, in figure compositions; to natural features and human works in landscape; to details, accessories, personal trappings, etc., in portraits and studies. In the earliest or Leyden period these things were almost delighted in for their own sake. Later on they were all made subservient to the artistic idea of the particular piece, but in the latest epoch they are no longer needed, because the artistic effect which was previously compassed by their means is now secured immediately through the magic of treatment and of paint. So in landscape the 'Mill' contrasts in its simplicity with the comparative wealth in detail and in interlacing lights and shades of the earlier studies; the 'Syndics' is empty materially beside the 'Night Watch,' but in artistic interest more richly endowed. Some of the latest groups and portrait studies appear still more sumptuous and varied

in costume and trappings than earlier pieces such as the double portrait at Dresden, Plate 11, or the Cassel 'Saskia,' yet if we look into them we see that the effect is a marvellous piece of artistic illusion. Things are not there at all, but only the semblance or effect of things. Breadth is in this way combined with incomparable richness and subtilty, and the last word of impressionist painting has been spoken.

The deepening of spiritual expression just spoken of, may be followed in pieces like the 'Good Samaritan' and 'Supper at Emmaus,' of 1648, in the Louvre; the Brunswick 'Noli Me Tangere,' of 1651; the 'Jacob Blessing,' Cassel, 1656; the extraordinary but in some ways nobly expressive 'Saul,' of the Hague; to the Darmstadt 'Scourging,' of 1668; and the St. Petersburg 'Prodigal' of about 1669. In like manner some of the last-named pictures, with the van der Hoop 'Jewish Bride' and the 'Family' at Brunswick, illustrate the richness of colouring and splendid manipulation which characterized this last and greatest period of Rembrandt's career. As the two following chapters are specially designed to deal with these two aspects of the master's art, the present chapter, the aim of which has been mainly historical, may here find its close.

CHAPTER X

REMBRANDT AS ARTIST: CONCEPTION AND TREATMENT

Faults and shortcomings. Amateurishness: meaning of the term as expressing Rembrandt's experimental vein and occasional uncertainty. His hesitation in the matter of lighting. Effect on his art of his solitary life. Defects in Rembrandt's treatment of the human form. His female nudes.

The artistic qualities of Rembrandt's painted work in general. The intellectual and moral elements in his art. His appreciation of character. Depth and seriousness of his insight. His religious compositions. His treatment in its various aspects of the life of Christ. His final word in the 'Return of the Prodigal.'

It was pointed out in the first chapter that Rembrandt, though a supremely great artist, was by no means faultless, and a comparison was hinted at between him and Shakespeare. Shakespeare gives himself away to the critics with the most easy insouciance, and his offences as dramatist and writer are rank and smell to heaven, but, to borrow Matthew Arnold's phrase, 'What does it matter?' Shakespeare's successes are so numerous and so transcendent, the level of his thought and of his art is so lofty, that we are glad of his faults because they seem to keep him within the circle of our common humanity. So it is with Rembrandt. His genius was so overmastering that in view of

his achievement when at his best, his mistakes and comparative failures count for very little. These mistakes and failures however exist, and unless due account be taken of them no true picture of the man can be formed.

Is there any general term that conveys the characteristics which these shortcomings of Rembrandt have in common? We can form a notion of some of them by using a word which in connection with Rembrandt may seem somewhat surprising. It is the word 'amateurish.'

One side of Rembrandt's activity as an artist is marked by a certain amateurishness. It may seem paradoxical to use this term about any of the work of a man who was so perfect a master of all the practical details of an artist's *métier*, but the term has in this connection a useful meaning that may be briefly explained. The amateur, as distinct from the professional, is not necessarily the unskilful person. He may be more gifted and clever than any one else at the same work, but he will be comparatively uncertain and experimental. The amateur will take risks that the professional avoids, and will sometimes make a brilliant success, and at other times land himself in difficulties. He will try new ways of doing things, and evince a certain restlessness in endeavour, as if he were not quite sure what he could accomplish, and was determined not to fail for want of originality and spirit. The professional, on the other hand, knows just what he can accomplish, and has the easiest and safest means to his end always in readiness. His work is even and undisturbed, and there is no element in it of hesitation nor of experiment.

What is here called amateurishness in painting is a quality we should be tender with in this country, for it attaches to

some of the greatest masters of the British school. There was amateurishness in Reynolds's incessant experiments in new painting media, which led to the speedy ruin of no small part of his work; there was amateurishness in Turner's excursions into fairyland; there was amateurishness in the efforts to compass the so-called 'grand style' of men like Etty, who were born painters, but who never really found, or were not content to follow, their true vocation. Millais was a brilliant amateur, in whose work the principle of 'hit or miss' seems to predominate. In contrast to the British painters the French are all professionals. They have learnt their business and pursue an even course seldom falling below, and seldom rising conspicuously above, their own level.

As compared with Rembrandt, Velasquez, a painter of equal rank, represents what has here been termed the 'professional' as opposed to the 'amateur' style of work. Velasquez always gives one the impression that he has a perfectly clear idea of what he wants to do and of the proper means to employ. He is of course, like every artist of supreme genius, daring and versatile, but his imagination never gets out of hand, and the highest tasks seem just as perfectly under his control as the most ordinary journeyman's work. With Rembrandt, on the contrary, we have the sense that he was like Turner haunted by some vaguely conceived vision of beauty, that seemed to leave all he actually accomplished imperfect and unsatisfactory. This involved an uncertainty in his work, which gives it additional human interest, but detracts something from its artistic quality when measured by a purely aesthetic standard. Lippmann admits that he cannot tell

the reason of many of the various alterations Rembrandt made in his etchings, and seems to hint that the intention was not always clear to the artist himself.[1] De Piles noticed in the seventeenth century that Rembrandt would retouch his plates four or five times 'pour en changer le clair-obscur et pour chercher un bon effet.'[2] We may say the same of the almost innumerable painted studies he executed both from himself and from other models. The intention of these is by no means always clear. We have seen that the self-portraits had nothing to do with the operation of personal vanity, nor were they, to use a studio phrase, mere 'pot-boilers' multiplied for sale on purely commercial principles. Rembrandt of course sold, or tried to sell, these studies, but his object in painting them was, we may be sure, an artistic one. In each of them he had before his mind some artistic problem of light-and-shade or colour, but it is doubtful whether he was clear in each case in his own mind as to what he wanted. He gives us the impression rather of one feeling his way than of a clear-sighted dispassionate executant as was Velasquez.

The same impression of uncertainty we derive from a study of Rembrandt's different methods of lighting. The lighting of a piece is, like its scheme of colour, a matter of artistic choice, but a painter is never able to feel quite as free in the first case as in the second. In colour the choice is tolerably open, but an effect of lighting must in strictness be properly motived. It must have its source or its sources, which are either shown or else can be reasonably understood. An illumination, the source of which is unseen and of which no natural explanation is suggested,

1 *Engraving and Etching*, Eng. ed. p. 177. 2 *Urkunden*, p. 438.

at once offers a challenge to criticism. Now Rembrandt would have liked to treat his light-and-shade in arbitrary fashion, making it convey the artistic impression he desired, without any too close dependence on material possibilities, and if he had done this frankly and consistently it is probable that no one in the present day would have blamed him. His conscience however seems to have troubled him and led to his adopting the devices already described (ante, p. 213 f.), the aim of which was to furnish a material explanation of the effect. We get tired of the dark figure that comes in so conveniently to mask the light, and of the hand which shades it so carefully from our eyes, and would have forgiven him for leaving his light unmotived as easily as we forgive Shakespeare for making a seaport in Bohemia.

In one or two smaller matters the quality in Rembrandt's work that is here under notice comes prominently into view. The habit of grimacing before the glass is one of these. It is true that it is only the youthful Rembrandt that indulges in this, but it is a very characteristic trait. Another point is the frequent repetition of a device for forcing up an effect that is not really artistic but on which he seems to have set great store. The reference is to the delineation of the shadow of an outstretched hand for the purpose of increasing an effect of relief. Such a shadow appears in the etched portrait of Sylvius of 1646, B. 280, in a somewhat startling and unexplained fashion. It is very conspicuous in the 'Night Watch,' where the shadow of Banning Cocq's hand and arm is thrown on the yellow dress of his lieutenant, and in the '100 Florin Plate,' where the old woman to the right hand of Christ holds

her skinny arms so that their shadow falls, not very truthfully, on the dress of the principal figure and the pilaster by which He stands. It was not as if the painter had carried out the principle of delineating local shadows everywhere in all their sharpness. He has not given himself the trouble to do this consistently, but has picked out this particular shadow effect for emphasis, and the device is rather too obvious. In technique, though as a rule Rembrandt's practice in oils is very solid and workmanlike, yet one notes in the early, anxiously treated, studies how the lights are painfully loaded, and how the handle of the brush has been used to draw curling lines of hair and beard in the wet paint. In later works, in jewels and armour, details are almost modelled plastically in the thick empasto. This is all interesting and characteristic, but it is not oil-painting.

On a much larger scale the multiplication of somewhat forced and even fantastic motives in the 'Night Watch' is a symptom of this same uneasiness, this tendency to experiment, which is here under discussion. We may find some explanation of it in the fact that Rembrandt lived and worked so much alone. There is nothing that preserves an artist of genius from falling into wayward courses better than contact with his fellows. Michelangelo, as well as Rembrandt, was intolerant of society, and the mannerisms, which increased upon Buonarroti as the years advanced, are largely due to the same cause that led Rembrandt into these fanciful excesses. Both men were a little withdrawn from the atmosphere of healthy commonplace in which the mass of mankind live and work. It is worth notice that a third artist of great

original genius, who had it in him to be eccentric, was saved by his instinct for intercourse with his fellows. This was Albrecht Dürer, who kept in touch all his life with his brother artists in Germany, Italy, and Flanders, and reaped his reward in that broadening of his style which alone rendered possible the 'Apostles' of the Nuremberg Gallery.

The peculiarities in Rembrandt's work to which attention has here been called may seem to some comparatively trifling, but as a fact, in the eyes of many critics, they count against him somewhat seriously. There are those who accept with equanimity Rembrandt's ugly female nudes, because they recognize that his interest in this particular objective attached itself rather to colour and texture than to form, but who are provoked at these needless eccentricities, which seem below the standard of the splendid period of modern painting which Rembrandt and his compeers adorned. Hence the time spent over this theme will not be held wasted.

Other faults in Rembrandt's work will bulk more largely in the estimation of the public at large than what has here been noticed. The eye accustomed to the abstract beauty of form in the work of the Greeks and the Italians is naturally offended at Rembrandt's complacent presentation of figures one would rather see draped than in the nude. In his own time Rembrandt was taken to task pretty severely for these delinquencies, and there is a poetic effusion describing his female models in very uncomplimentary terms.[1] Now it is not merely the avowed

[1] *Urkunden*, No. 352. The writer may have had in his mind Rembrandt's etching of the 'Woman on a Hillock,' B, 198, which certainly justifies his wrath.

Italianizers of Rembrandt's own time and the succeeding century who have blamed his nudes, but we have the same complaint from modern critics who are quite emancipated from these classical traditions. Listen for example to Émile Michel :—

'Parmi celles qui ont posé pour Rembrandt il en est de tout à fait horribles ; le maître copie scrupuleusement leur laideur, sans omettre aucune des déformations que l'âge, les conditions de la vie, ou les épreuves de la maternité ont pu leur infliger. Il ne transige pas sur ce point et il n'a pas d'autre prétention que de faire vrai. Certaines de ces femmes sont même effrayantes à voir, et nos lecteurs en jugeront eux-mêmes par cette maritorne à la mine effrontée, au rire bestial, être avachi et dégradé dont Rembrandt, sans nous épargner aucun des froncements de son cou ou des plis de son ventre, a tracé, . . . la très magistrale mais trop véridique image.'[1]

Other critics have taken the view that Rembrandt was not indifferent to the defects in his models, but that he could not help himself as he could get no better ones. This plea implies an accusation against the female population of Amsterdam that is hardly just. There must have been fairly well made girls in all classes, and it is idle to pretend that only the ugly ones could be induced to sit for the figure. The use of wooden shoes, one might think, would keep the feet uncramped, and Rembrandt was not really forced to make the extremities so coarse and clumsy as is too often the case in his work. We must reluctantly admit that his eye was not sensitive to beauty

1 *Rembrandt*, p. 388. The reference is to the drawing referred to ante, p. 146.

of form, and that he did not really care how uncomely in this respect were his painted or etched nudes. Some would maintain that he was not to blame in this, and would contend that ugliness of shape does not matter so long as full justice is done to beauty of surface and colour. It is true that what Rembrandt saw in human flesh was its exquisitely graded colouring, its mobility, its softness, its play of light-and-shade in which here a dimpled hollow and there a prominence of bone give accent and decision; and these beauties of impression he rendered in a way few painters have ever matched. We must not forget however, that the Venetians and Correggio had seen all this, but had their eyes open too to the grace of contour and the evidence of well knit elastic structure beneath the integument, which the Greek sculptors have made us understand. Even Velasquez, though as a rule he looked for the same qualities in flesh which attracted Rembrandt, could on occasion, as in the Rokeby 'Venus,' build up with bone and muscle and nerve a distinctive type of bodily structure, and give all the elasticity and grace of a perfectly compacted and finished form, alert and sensitive in every member. Such wonderful flesh-painting as Rembrandt has given us in the 'Bathsheba' of the Louvre, or the 'Bather' of the London National Gallery, could perfectly well have been combined with grace of line. The modern example of Whistler has shown that all the qualities of what has been called 'impressionist' painting can coexist with a feeling for form that would become a Greek medalist, and Rembrandt's deficiency in this important respect must count against him. It is all the more to be deplored that the artist was not at greater pains in this

important matter, because many of his drawings of youthful male models exhibit, as we have seen, ante, p. 145) a feeling for structure and for grace that, had he cultivated it, would have added greatly to the value of his work as a whole.

We pass now to a more general treatment of the artistic qualities of the painted work of Rembrandt.

The operations which go to make up the modern picture may be roughly divided under three headings, Conception, Treatment, and Handling. In the case of Rembrandt, under the first heading would specially fall to be noticed (1) his quick apprehension of character and sympathetic reading of human nature; (2) his dramatic and moving presentment of Scriptural themes from the human side. Under the heading Treatment come: (1) the impressionist rendering of objects, not as they are in themselves, but in the mass, as light-and-shade and colour; (2) schemes of chiaroscuro and colour characteristic of Rembrandt's style. Finally, Handling may be held to embrace (1) various methods of brush-work used by Rembrandt at different periods of his career; (2) the idiosyncrasy of his execution as expressive of his artistic individuality.

It would be pedantic to follow systematically such a scheme of topics, and it is only adduced to give an idea of the chief points of interest in Rembrandt's work on the artistic side.

In the conception of a subject the artist is primarily the man of thought and feeling. He may be superficial and careless of the deeper issues of life, or profound in insight and acute in sympathy, and these moral and

intellectual qualities will necessarily make themselves felt in his art. Rembrandt is to be distinguished from that large company of artists, who, with all the genius and charm they may possess, strike us as intellectually slight or careless. Millais, and in a less marked degree, Whistler, are conspicuous examples. On the other hand, he was not one of those painters who, like Rossetti or Blake, are fertile in thoughts, but may be said rather to translate their thoughts into form and colour, than to create directly in the artistic media without any conscious meditation that could be expressed in words. In the case of Rembrandt the artist never recedes from view behind the thinker, and the expression is always a purely artistic act. Rembrandt may be coupled with Giotto, with Michelangelo, with Dürer, with J. F. Millet, as an artist to the backbone, but an artist before whose work we find ourselves in communion with a mind of philosophic depth and power. He has not, we feel, been satisfied with the mere outward impression of a theme, but has penetrated it to its depths and discerned within it what the superficial observer will not even guess at. What is the difference between a Hals and a Holbein, between a Romney and a Reynolds, but the difference between the eye that seldom pierces beneath the surface, and the informing imagination that has grasped, and in grasping has given life and significance to, the whole? Rembrandt fails often to see beauty where his theme would suggest it to him, but he seldom misses the significance, human or divine, of what is before him. There are, we have already noticed, sometimes slightness and conventionality, sometimes coarseness, in his conception and treatment, but as a general

rule his thoughts were just and profound, his sympathies wide, and his appreciation of finer issues was seldom at fault.

In connection with Rembrandt's drawings and etchings, enough has been said in illustration of the artist's general capacity for representing varieties of character and expression. Appreciation of character is an intellectual but not always a moral quality. Like Hogarth, Rembrandt had a keen eye for the whimsicalities of human nature, and, as we have seen, his studies of beggars, itinerant vendors, and the like, fill quite a considerable place in his work. Some of the out-of-the-way situations which Rembrandt has treated with coarse humour are of a kind over which the modern Anglo-Saxon is accustomed to draw a veil. Continental peoples differ from the Americans and the British in that they take these situations more lightly. That humour should have a touch of coarseness and lubricity does not scandalize them, and it must be admitted that Anglo-Saxon sensitiveness in this regard is of comparatively recent growth. When Émile Zola was reproached by a friend with some passages in *La Terre*, he was quite concerned, and protested he had tried to keep religiously to the established traditions of French humour. Whatever the Frenchman wishes to change, the traditional laws of literature and art are for him sacred. We, on the contrary, are now shocked at what the contemporaries of Hogarth and Fielding regarded as a matter of course. Now Rembrandt's 'free' or 'broad' pieces, which do not appear among his pictures or drawings, and among his etchings only number five, must be regarded as coarsely humorous and not immoral. With Michel, we

may wish that Rembrandt had not etched them, but they form only a microscopical part of his work and are not in themselves so very dreadful.

There are many artists who possess the power of seizing and of rendering character, whose attention is only caught by what is quaint or amusing. Theirs is the capacity in graphic design that was exercised in literature so effectively by Charles Dickens. Their power ceases when the greater issues of life are marshalled on the scene, and if they attempt to deal with these they become melodramatic. Rembrandt's genius was in this respect more akin to the genius of Shakespeare than to that of Dickens, in that the lambent play of fancy about the whimsicalities of character and situation gives place at times to penetrating insight into the heart of human tragedy. 'No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve . . . a plague o' both your houses . . . I was hurt under your arm'—what Rembrandt-like shadow here against the brightness of Mercutio's playful sallies! As Shakespeare unveils the depths of human experience, so Rembrandt every now and then confronts us with those eternal verities of which we used to hear so much from Thomas Carlyle.

Reference was made on a previous page, ante, p. 259, to some portrait studies from an aged woman, at St. Petersburg and elsewhere. They are all fine studies in the quiet majestic style of the period in Rembrandt's activity that culminated with the 'Syndics' of 1661–2. Save in one case however there is nothing in them that specially rivets the attention. The exception is the study No. 805 at the Hermitage, shown on Plate 37. Rembrandt has

caught the sitter in a moment when the soul was withdrawn from the interests of the hour, and was travelling back over the spaces of the past, and the artist created from his impression a type of old age full of the most intimate human feeling. The slight turn of the head on to the right shoulder and the position of the hands carry out the idea of the piece, which suggests a whole life-time of experience over which the mind is pensively brooding. The seat of expression is the eyes. The black hood casts that shadow on the upper part of the face so constant in Rembrandt's pictures, but the light catches the lowered lids, and from under these the dark pupils gaze out, not at the spectator nor on the surroundings of the moment, but upon life at large which is seen tranquilly and sadly in the light of experience. The other studies of the same sitter, and the scores of similar pieces that occur in Rembrandt's work, have their parallels in the numerous portrait studies by his contemporaries and pupils such as Lievens and Bol and Flinck and Maes. Rembrandt's work is always stronger, richer, more 'magistral,' more firmly handled, than theirs, but the difference is one of degree not of kind, whereas a head with the expression of the one here discussed is altogether out of their range, and belongs to a different world of art.

Rembrandt's power of conveying expression of a forcible and tragic kind, as distinct from the more widely diffused gift of touching off character, was noticed very early in his career by Constantin Huygens. It will be remembered that a laudatory passage about one of Rembrandt's pictures was omitted from the quotation from Huygens given in the fourth chapter, ante, p. 68 f. It is in praise of an

early painting that represents the 'Repentance of Judas,' and it is interesting to know that the picture still exists in private hands in Paris. No one now, with Rembrandt's later works in mind, would use such terms about it, but the passage is valuable as showing Huygens's discernment at this early date in respect of a quality that was actually to furnish Rembrandt with one of his most valid titles to fame. This is what Huygens has committed to his tablets.

'The picture of the "Repentant Judas" I take as an example of all his works. Let the whole of Italy come here, and all that there remains from remotest antiquity of things of beauty and wonder . . . the gesture of the despairing Judas alone . . . that Judas who rages, moans, implores forgiveness and yet does not expect it, or express such expectation on his features; that dreadful face, the hair plucked out, the habit torn, the arms contorted, the hands clenched till the blood comes, the knee bent by a sudden movement, the whole body writhing with a fury that excites our compassion—that figure I pit against any work of art of any country, and I want to make this clear to those uninstructed people who imagine that nowadays nothing can be done or said, which has not already been done and said in antiquity.'

It is naturally in connection with religious subjects that this characteristic of Rembrandt's work is most in evidence, and from the 'Judas' of about 1628 to the master's latest effort in monumental art, the 'Prodigal' at St. Petersburg, we can follow in a series of masterpieces the working of his mind on the themes presented by the sacred narrative. The story of Tobit, of which, following a fashion set by

PLATE 37.—STUDY OF AN AGED WOMAN
St. Petersburg

To face p. 218

earlier northern painters such as Elsheimer, he was specially fond,[1] is on the whole idyllic, though the blindness of the old man introduces a note of pathos that goes to the heart (see ante, p. 183). The Old Testament stories of the patriarchs possess epic elevation and breadth, and Rembrandt rises here to the height of his theme. More intense, more dramatic, is the interest of the scenes from the Gospels culminating in the Passion of Christ and His appearance in the Risen Body, and here again, Rembrandt, when at his best, is more satisfying to the religious sense than any other artist.

It will be instructive in this connection to take the central figure of the Christian story, and to note the different situations, idyllic, epic, and dramatic, in which Rembrandt has portrayed the figure of Christ. We shall see with what warmth of human feeling he has invested those scenes in which the Saviour, an infant or a growing youth, makes holy by His presence the simple incidents of family life; how he rises to the height of epic dignity when Christ moves a mature and heroic form through the acts of His earthly ministry; with how intimate a sympathy he withdraws the veil from the scars of agony, and displays the Man of Sorrows a sublime though pathetically human figure in the tragedy of His Passion; and finally how he invests the Risen form with a power and grace that have been made perfect through weakness and suffering, and completes the picture by embodying the eternal love that Christ revealed, in the father of the Prodigal.

Rembrandt's 'Holy Families' have always been popular favourites, and have often been regarded as mere studies

1 There are 36 Tobit drawings in Dr. Hofstede de Groot's Catalogue.

from human life. The example chosen for illustration on Plate 12, a very beautiful picture at St. Petersburg, preferred by Waagen to all the artist's other pieces of the kind, is dated 1645, and Valentiner believes that Hendrickje Stoffels, who would then be a girl of about nineteen, was the model for the Mary. It is at any rate the same young girl that appears at the window in the charming study of the same year in the Dulwich Gallery. The character of the scene is unmistakably indicated by the appearance of the small angels, partly copied from those in Domenichino's Communion of St. Jerome, which Rembrandt would know from engravings. It may be noticed also in passing that in almost all these family pieces the occupation of the carpenter is clearly indicated,[1] so that there can be no real doubt as to their character.

Here both Mary and the child are delightful successes. She wears deep crimson over blue, and the white fichu and cap are flecked with lovely cool greys that enhance the warm carnations on the foreshortened face. The book she is holding is evidently a Protestant bible, perhaps the one that figures in the inventory of 1656, in double columns with marginal references, and is a miracle of still-life painting, in which we seem to see the leaves curl up and hear them rustle as she bends forward to look into the cradle. Her solicitude is charmingly natural but needless, for the infant is very fast asleep. Rembrandt has sought for Him no Raphaelesque beauty, but made Him a stolid little Dutch child that reminds us somewhat of a baby by Hogarth. A very delicate small pencil drawing of a child

1 E.g., in the 'Ménage du Menuisier,' in the Louvre, the 'Holzhacker Familie' at Cassel, and the 'Holy Family' at Munich.

in his cradle, that has passed from the collection of Lord Leighton to that of Mr. J. P. Heseltine, seems a study for this picture.[1] The wicker-work of the cradle is executed with masterly ease, the lights flicked on in crisp touches; the scarlet coverlet lined with fur is rich and juicy, and the child's face in half-tone upon the white linen is delicately felt. (See Plate 9b, ante, p. 50.)

The 'Holy Family' or the 'Carpenter's Shop,' that used to hang in the Salon Carré of the Louvre, is a better known example of the same homely treatment of the sacred theme, and the figure of St. Anna as the motherly gossip adds to the domestic feeling. Here the child is taking the breast; in the 'Holzhacker Familie' of 1646 at Cassel it is the quaintest little figure, clad in a complete suit of red down to the feet, and looks as if it were going to cry as it is being cuddled by its mother, while a cat is purring contentedly on the floor at her feet; and in the Munich 'Holy Family' it is asleep on the mother's knee, wrapped bambino-like in swaddling clothes. This is an important piece, Rembrandt's first attempt at life-sized figures, and is dated 1631, but the feeling of the scene is the same as it remains through all the periods of his artistic career. The numerous etchings and drawings of Nativities or Holy Families agree in the main with the pictures just noticed. One drawing in the collection of M. Bonnat in Paris is the homeliest of all. It is a night incident on the journey to Egypt, and Joseph is holding a light while Mary is attending to the child on her lap. The slight outline etching, B. 58, in which, as in the Munich picture of 1631, Mary is showing the child to Joseph, is full of charm. An exception is

1 De Groot, 1012; Lippmann, 188 B.

B. 61, the Mother and Child among clouds, and here Rembrandt has sacrificed the warmth of human feeling without succeeding in giving the mystic beauty of which some of the great Italians had the secret.

The youthful Christ among the doctors in the Temple was a favourite theme with Rembrandt, and occurs often in different forms of composition among his drawings. The etching, B. 65, is the most effective version of the scene. It is lightly etched in line—von Seidlitz calls it unfinished—and is one of those works in which Rembrandt has indulged to the full his delight in indicating varieties of character. In the midst of a company of the typical scribes and Sadducees the ideally fresh and simple figure of the Divine Boy is seated with raised hand as if He were rather lecturing them than hearing and asking questions. B. 60 shows Him returning home after the escapade, on each side holding a parent's hand. A beautiful drawing in the Fodor Museum at Amsterdam shows an older but still youthful figure that might have been studied from Titus, and seems to represent Christ at the outset of His ministry accompanied by some of His disciples.[1]

As the ministry goes forward, the figure, now represented with a beard, gains in epic dignity, but as a rule preserves that simplicity which is the charm of this side of Rembrandt's work. The figure is not made up, nor stuffed, nor put to pose, but taken as it were from the life, the very man as His fellows saw Him as He moved among them, the teacher, the friend, the worker of beneficent wonders

1 Dr. Hofstede de Groot suggests as the subject for this drawing 'The Tribute Money (?).' The interpretation in the text seems more natural.

of healing. This characteristic simplicity is the more marked when we compare it with the occasional lapses of Rembrandt into the theatrical, his occasional dependence on the types created by his predecessors. The Christ in the large 'Raising of Lazarus,' B. 73 (if it be really Rembrandt's design) is stagey, as is also the earlier 'Christ at Emmaus' in the picture of about 1629, and it gives us the same sense of unreality when we find a Dürer type of Christ in the 'Cleansing of the Temple,' B. 69, and one borrowed from Rubens in the scene with the woman of Samaria, B. 71, and in B. 88, the 'Disciples at Emmaus.' The freshness and immediacy of Rembrandt's intuition are conspicuous by contrast in the noble etching 'Christ as Teacher,' B. 67, one of the master's greatest efforts in religious art, and also in the Christ of the '100 Florin Plate,' B. 74, though here there is less spontaneity; while the slighter suggestion of the figure in such drawings as the 'Raising of Jairus' Daughter' (Seymour Haden collection now at Berlin)[1] and 'Christ with Martha and Mary' (Tayler Museum),[2] are the same in idea.

The Christ of the scenes of the Passion presented a fresh problem, and it is very noteworthy that the carefully elaborated series of pictures from these subjects dating from 1633 to 1639, and now in the Pinacothek at Munich, offer to us nothing that from the present point of view is of surpassing interest. The works leave us as cold as do these colossal impositions, the two Rubens pictures in the cathedral at Antwerp. The St. Petersburg version of the 'Taking Down from the Cross,' of 1634, is more moving than the smaller and earlier piece in the Munich series,

1 Ante, p. 130. 2 Ante, p. 134.

but there is nothing in all these to compare with the grandeur and pathos of the 'Flagellation' in the Museum at Darmstadt, of 1668. This is one of the master's very latest works, painted only the year before the still more intense and moving 'Return of the Prodigal' at St. Petersburg, of the painter's death-year 1669. It exhibits that simple austerity of conception which was the end to which all the development of his art had been tending. Two executioners, for one of whom there is a fine drawing, are busy with the ropes that bind the upright slender form of the sufferer, nude save for the loin-cloth, that has preserved an incomparable dignity and greatness in the extremity of physical distress. There is something unearthly in the pallor of the flesh, and in the remoteness of the expression in the countenance seen betwixt the thin uplifted arms. If quiet resolution be here predominant, we find the physical yielding of the human powers sympathetically touched in the slight though expressive etching, B. 75, where in the Garden an angel is seen supporting the fainting figure of the Saviour.

In the two large etchings of 'Christ Shown to the People,' B. 76, and 'The Three Crosses,' B. 78, the principal figure is on a small scale, but in the latter finely felt, while the 'Christ' of the grisaille study in the National Gallery, for the 'Ecce Homo' etching, B. 77, is a noble conception, far more effective than the 'Christ' of the corresponding etching, the execution of which is not by the master's own hand. The grisaille is indeed one of Rembrandt's most dramatic renderings of a great religious theme. The desperate earnestness of the awful faces that surround Pilate in a ring, where the accusers kneel at his feet to

implore judgment against their victim, contrasts powerfully with the majestic calm of the Christ, who, relieved against a throng of picturesquely touched Roman soldiers, forms the apex of the pyramidal group of which Pilate and the Jews are the base. The crowd, that fills the court below and surges up to the foot of the tribunal, is an example of Rembrandt's 'impressionist' treatment of objects in a mass. The whole of the execution is bright and forcible, and the piece vibrates with life.

The scenes of the reappearance of Christ on earth after the Resurrection were made by Rembrandt the occasion of some of his most happily conceived designs. There is something idyllic in the meeting of the Risen Lord with Mary Magdalen amidst the gloom of the rocks and trees in the picture at Brunswick. The Christ is robed only in a linen wrapper, and about Him there plays a very faint ghostly light. The double action in the figure is feelingly rendered. There is withdrawal in the bend of the form and the hand that plucks away the robe, but the tender though reserved inclination of the head towards the woman, and the sympathetic gesture of the other hand, are loving-kindness itself. The rapt devotion of the adoring Magdalen, the solemn loneliness of the mysterious garden to which the shadows of night still cling, the touch of light on the clouds above, combine to invest the piece with a poetic charm, rare even in the work of Rembrandt. There is less intensity but an equal grace of poetry in the Buckingham Palace rendering of the same theme, where the picturesquely attired figure of the supposed gardener is relieved against the dawning light of the eastern sky.

Christ among the disciples after the Resurrection, with the St. Thomas episode, is represented in several drawings, and in the 'Incredulity of St. Thomas' at St. Petersburg, an early work, marred by the somewhat theatrical gestures which early Rembrandts too often exhibit. The etching of the Risen Christ, B. 89, where the form of the revenant towers in unapproachable dignity amidst the group of His followers, is said by von Seidlitz to exhibit 'the most lofty and the purest embodiment of the type which we meet with in the work of the master,'[1] but the etching is very slight and offers little more than a suggestion. On the other hand, the theme of the Supper at Emmaus was worked out by Rembrandt into more than one carefully studied oil painting. The subject was popular with Elsheimer and the painters who fill in the interval between him and Rembrandt, and we should expect the latter to have treated it. He has done this in so masterly a fashion that the 'Supper at Emmaus' is one of the best known of Rembrandt's subject-pictures from the life of Christ. The version every one knows hangs in the much visited Louvre, and forms the subject of one of the most telling passages of Eugène Fromentin's *Maîtres d'Autrefois*. We possess for it certain studies, while there is more than one pictorial rendering which it is interesting to compare with this Louvre masterpiece of 1648.

One of the small pictures of religious subjects of the Leyden period had been on this theme. It was one of those in which the young artist, aiming at vigour of effect, forces the note and becomes theatrical. The actors in the scene have been seated round a table on which is a lamp.

[1] *Verzeichniss*, p. 79.

Christ is placed on the right hand in such a position that His figure masks the light of the lamp and tells out against the illumined wall as a dark silhouette, the light on the wall encircling the head as with a halo. The figure is drawn up in a somewhat theatrical pose, and the profile of the face is that traditional in the Italian schools. One disciple has suddenly risen, overturning his chair, and has fallen on his knees in the foreground, while the other one across the table starts back as if struck with awe and alarm. Among the etchings and drawings there are several which give other experimental versions of the theme, and bring us, as it were, gradually to a simpler and more concentrated rendering.

The Louvre picture is shown on Plate 38. A somewhat larger version of the same subject hangs in the museum at Copenhagen and bears the same date, 1648. A comparison of it with the Louvre piece is instructive. The relative position of Christ and the two disciples is much the same as in Paris, but the heads are more on a level and that of Christ in consequence not so conspicuous. The servant, who in both pictures comes in on the right, instead of looking to the principal figure, turns his face toward one of the disciples, thereby withdrawing the gaze of the spectator from the principal figure. A fresh figure is moreover introduced in the person of an old woman, who stands beyond the serving man and holds in her hand a light which illumines the scene and is masked from the spectator by the head of the right-hand disciple, a somewhat artificial arrangement which carries us back to the early treatment of the same theme already referred to. There is no halo round the head of Christ.

In the Louvre picture we see the result of the same process of concentration which has been observed in comparing other final renderings with preliminary sketches and studies. The second serving figure is left out, and with it the scheme of lighting which is so often used by Rembrandt as to become a convention. The spectator's eye is at once directed to the principal figure towards which the looks of the other three are also turned though with differing degrees of intentness. This simplification serves to bring out into clearer relief the main intention of the piece. The moment chosen is that of the breaking of bread in which the truth about the person of their guest is borne in upon the two wayfarers. To one the truth has been revealed and he leans forward with hands clasped, while the other, half-convinced and still overmastered by surprise, has thrown himself back from the table. The indifference of the simple and comely serving youth, who has no inkling of the meaning of the scene, acts as an excellent foil to the expressive gestures of the others. The face and figure of Christ are among the most wonderful in art, and in themselves are sufficient to vindicate Rembrandt's method in the treatment of sacred themes. On the expression of the head of Christ Fromentin has written some sentences that are here quoted. Apart from their intrinsic eloquence and beauty, they are of value as showing the impression Rembrandt's pictures have produced on qualified technical critics for their merits of imagination and feeling. It is one great testimony to Rembrandt's genius that he appeals as man of thought and feeling to artists, and as painter to the intelligent outside public. Fromentin, an artist and

PLATE 38.—THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS

Louvre

To face p. 288

expert in technique, takes the 'Christ at Emmaus' purely from the human and imaginative side.

'This little picture of homely aspect,' he writes, 'with nothing striking about it, dull in colour, and modestly, even tamely handled, would suffice to establish for ever the greatness of an artist. We need not speak of the disciple who has understood and who clasps his hands in adoration, nor of him who, startled, lays his napkin on the table, stares straight in the face of Christ, and gives utterance to what in ordinary life would be an exclamation of surprise. We can leave out the youthful serving man with his dark eyes who brings in a dish, and who only notices the gestures of the guests. We need only keep of this unique work the Christ alone and it would be enough. What painter is there who has not made a Christ, at Rome or in Florence, Sienna, Milan, Venice, at Bâle, Bruges, Antwerp? From Leonardo, Raphael and Titian, to Van Eyck, Holbein, Rubens and Van Dyck, how have they not deified or humanized Him, shown Him transfigured or in the scenes of His mortal life, in His Passion or in His Death? In how many forms have they related the events of His history on earth or conceived the glories of His apotheosis? But has any one ever yet imagined Him thus, as He sits facing us there and breaks the bread as He broke it on the night of the Last Supper, so pale and so thin, in His pilgrim's robe, with those darkened lips on which suffering has left its traces; with the large soft brown eyes whose full gaze he has directed upwards, while a sort of cold phosphorescent light plays in a dim glory about His head—a living, breathing being, but yet one

who has assuredly passed through the gates of death? The attitude of this divine visitant with that intense ardour in a face whose features are hardly to be discerned, and expression is all in the movement of the lips and in the eyes—these traits inspired from what source one knows not, and produced one cannot tell how, are all of value inestimable. No other art has produced the like; no one before Rembrandt, no one after him has made us understand these things.'[1]

To complete our idea of Rembrandt's treatment of the life and work of Christ, we must take into account the great picture of the 'Return of the Prodigal' at St. Petersburg, the last and one of the noblest expressions of his art. (See Frontispiece.) It has been already said that Rembrandt 'conceived of the Divine Fatherhood incorporating itself in the infinite compassion, the all-embracing tenderness, of Christ' (ante, p. 34). The parable of the Prodigal Son is the gospel of the Divine Fatherhood, and is so distinctly Christian that it is natural to notice it in this place. For the chief group there is a careful drawing in pen and wash in the Teyler Museum at Haarlem.[2] Here the son has cast down his stick and bundle and flung himself on his knees at the feet of his father who lays one hand on his head and yields the other to the prodigal's despairing grasp. The face of the kneeling figure is seen in profile and Rembrandt has obviously taken great pains

1 Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*, 6th ed., Paris, 1890, p. 380 f.

2 De Groot, 1318; Lippmann, I, 167. There are several other drawings of the scene in other collections, noticed in Dr. Hofstede de Groot's Index to his Catalogue.

with it. A small boy looks sympathetically on from behind. This is an early drawing, and Rembrandt repeats the subject several times at later dates in his career, till we arrive at the final expression of the theme in the large oil painting just referred to. Here the place of the small boy has been taken by adult figures the connection of which with the main action is not easy to trace, but the principal group has been simplified and its effect proportionately intensified.

The picture is a noble example of Rembrandt's broad and summary handling in his latest period, and is magnificent in colour. The chief figures appear in front of a dark arched opening in the wall of the vine-covered house that occupies the background, from which the father has just issued to receive the wanderer. Two women under the archway look on sympathetically. Seated on the right in a black cap is the figure of a young man with a moustache, who is commonly taken to be the elder son of the parable. This cannot be the painter's intention, as the elder son was at the time of the incident in the fields, but he is evidently designed to represent the attitude of mind of the elder son, and his expression is one of disdain. Beside him, and nearer to the spectator, stands the sympathetic figure of an older man who looks down on what is going on with a serious and kindly gaze. The principal group is in the left foreground, and here one notes at once that there has been no attempt to bring the features of the returned wanderer into evidence. They are not emphasized as in the drawing and are only just discernible in the shadow, while the expression is conveyed by the form alone.

And what a wonderful form it is! He kneels with his back to the spectator, clothed in tattered rags of every conceivable hue of yellow, brown, and green. One shoe has fallen off, and the upturned sole of the foot shows the dust of the roadway. His head, on which the hair is closely cropped, is buried in the breast of the father, who has come forth to meet him and stoops over him with both hands on his ragged shoulders. The effacement of the personality of the helpless truant has concentrated all the interest of the scene on the father, who presses him to his heart and gazes down on him with infinite pity and tenderness. He is not only the father of the parable, but the eternal love incorporate. We are reminded of Dante's immortal line, surely one of the finest in all poetry,

'S aperse in nuovi amor l'eterno amore.'

In this group the divine and human meet, and we read here the final message of Rembrandt to the world.

CHAPTER XI

REMBRANDT AS ARTIST: TREATMENT AND HANDLING

The relation of an artist's execution to the rest of his work. Rembrandt as an executant in oils. Some comparisons.

The chronology of Rembrandt's technique. A general development but much variety within the periods. Prevailing hues at different epochs. Rembrandt's manipulation. Flemish practice and Dutch. Some Flemish traits in Rembrandt's technique. His normal handling. Opinions of old writers on his colour and manipulation.

Selected pictures by Rembrandt studied as representing his artistic statement as a whole. The 'Labourers in the Vineyard' (St. Petersburg); 'Danaë' (ibid.); 'Bathsheba' (Louvre); 'Civilis' (Stockholm); the 'Family' (Brunswick); 'Jacob Blessing' (Cassel); 'Hendrickje' (Salon Carré, Louvre); 'Jan Six' (Six Collection, Amsterdam); the 'Syndics' (Amsterdam).

Concluding word.

The general conception of a piece from the point of view of its subject, and its envisagement as a composition in form and colour, are in the theory of modern painting a single act. It is not the case of a thought consciously and deliberately clothed in an artistic dress, but of a thought that would have no existence save in so far as it is expressible in art. Furthermore, this artistic form that the thought assumes creates its own material envelope, and the technical execution of the piece is as little to be

dissociated from its artistic form as this last from the underlying idea. In other words, the handling of a picture is just so much a part of its treatment as the artistic treatment is a part of the original conception. In idea the creation of the picture should be a single act, and though laborious months may intervene between the vision and its incorporation in finished shape, the progress should be as regular and inevitable as the processes of nature.

It needs hardly to be said that the actual facts of artistic practice do not always or even often correspond to this abstract ideal. Possibly if archangels were materialized enough to paint, they would be the 'faultless painters' referred to in the introductory chapter, but it is doubtful whether they would be very attractive ones. A great part of the interest of the work of a painter like Rembrandt is a personal interest, evoked by our recognition of the striving, experimenting, human creature whose soul is in noble anguish over the result, that he sees perhaps but dimly, but towards which he struggles amain. We may help ourselves here with a hint from Greek philosophy. Plato would say that the idea of the finished work is a complete flawless entity laid up somewhere in the heavens, and that the painter on earth is trying to copy it. Aristotle would substitute the more profound conception of an idea not apart from the work but in it from the first, and striving ever to bring the matter, the ὕλη, into ultimate accord with the perfect form. This theory of artistic creation allows for the actual facts of which the walls of every studio are witnesses, for the processes that can be analyzed, the experiments that are tried and fail, the alterations that set right a defect, the success in one

quality that balances imperfection in another. Rembrandt's handling, like that of every painter possessed of the true ideal of his craft, represents a continued effort, which at times succeeds as perfectly as human effort ever can succeed, but at other times shows how long is art, how brief the time allotted to any mortal to cope with its transcendent difficulties.

The above considerations apply to Rembrandt more aptly than to many of his compeers in the front ranks of painting.

As an executant in oils Rembrandt belongs to those painters who delight in the medium for its own sake, and are never tired of testing its capabilities for conveying the most varied impressions of colour and of texture. Many painters, and among them some of the best, have used oil paint purely as a means, satisfied with the simplest and most direct procedure which would produce the required result. The smaller masters of the Dutch school worked in this fashion, and Fromentin, though himself a 'Techniker,' confesses that he cannot see how they painted—their process was so simple that it seems no process at all. Gainsborough among the moderns is the master of an easy direct execution in which no succession of processes is to be discerned. Velasquez, whose palette was curiously limited, is also very untroubled about means, and goes straight for his purpose by the shortest road. On the other side there are artists who as a matter of school tradition or of personal style have a distinct and recognizable method of work, which proceeds in every case according to a regular succession of processes. The Venetians and the Flemings of the school of Rubens are examples, the

former always laying in their pictures in dead colour and finishing with transparent glazes; the latter starting with transparent rubbings into which they afterwards painted with colours mixed with white.

Apart from all these more or less methodical craftsmen there are oil-painters who appear fascinated by the qualities of the materials themselves, and are never tired of trying experiments in media and methods of handling. They will match against different aspects of nature the capabilities of transparent and opaque pigment, and manipulate these with brush or spatula or finger-tip till they secure some subtle quality of which they are in search. They will paint thinly or load; with smooth or granular impasto; kneading the pigments into a firm homogeneous mass, or laying touch by touch, square and distinct, each apart from the other yet all combining at the proper focal distance of the eye in a single impression. An artist of this order delights in the varied qualities of paint for their own sakes, and the manipulation of them is in a sense an end in itself. Reynolds as compared with Gainsborough was one of these artists, and Rembrandt, in contrast to Velasquez, was another. Reynolds and Rembrandt agree in their somewhat elaborate experimental handling, but in another respect they differ most markedly. The experiments of Reynolds too often led to the ruin of his work, whereas the excellent condition of Rembrandt's pictures shows that he was guided by a just apprehension of what can and cannot be done with safety in the matter of pigments and of media.

It has been assumed that Rembrandt availed himself of the active commerce of his city with the Indies, East and

West, to procure for his palette rich Oriental colouring-stuffs. This would have been a dangerous indulgence, as the permanence of such fascinating pigments in the chemical combinations they might undergo is a doubtful matter, and if Rembrandt made these experiments he was very fortunate in their results, for his pictures as a whole have stood the test of time with remarkable success. As is the case however with all great colourists, it was not the actual pigments but their manipulation, that was the secret of the colour effects secured, and for some of the finest of these a limited palette sufficed.

When therefore we speak of Rembrandt as elaborate and even experimental in his technique, and compare him with Reynolds or with Turner, it must be understood that all his essays were kept within the bounds of sound and prudent craftsmanship, and he never imperilled the permanence of his work for the sake of obtaining some special effect that appealed to his fancy at the moment. The truth is that Rembrandt used the resources of the colour box as he used the technical media of the engraver, stretching these to their utmost limits and demanding from them all that they could legitimately be constrained to give, but keeping in this matter always on the right side of the line that separates the serious workman from the dabbler.

The following notes on the master's handling of oil paint are necessary to complete the picture of Rembrandt as artist.

The first question to be asked is how far the differences of handling observable in Rembrandt's paintings corres-

pond to any chronological scheme. In other words, did he vary his methods according to the successive periods of his career, keeping within each period more or less closely to a fixed manner of work? The answer here is that Rembrandt's technique altered as he advanced in knowledge and power, but only through the regular stages of progress from timidity to freedom, from preciseness to breadth, which mark the development of all great masters in paint.

This point can be conveniently illustrated by comparing two pictures of connected themes which happen to hang opposite each other in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. They are the 'Abraham Sacrificing Isaac' of 1635, and the later 'Abraham Entertaining the Angels.' This is not dated, and whereas Bode in the *Studien* placed it at about 1650, he has now in the *Complete Work* taken it back to near the date of the 'Sacrifice.' Though there are similarities between the two, especially in the rendering of the angels, yet a close examination shows such a difference in the handling as betokens an interval of at least ten or a dozen years. The 'Sacrifice' still retains the cool grey colour in the landscape, and the blues and violets in the drapery, of the early period, whereas the 'Entertaining' is throughout warmer and more glowing. The nude of the Isaac in the earlier piece is treated without much variety, and is firmly, even precisely, modelled in cool flesh tones. The hands are very carefully drawn and painted. In the hair of Abraham and of the angel the masses are softly rounded, but over all we note the smaller tresses drawn with the point of the brush in a rather dry and wiry manner. In the later picture the impasto is decidedly thicker, the touch richer and fuller, the hands are boldly

dashed in with free strokes of light and dark, the hair is treated in broad soft masses with no laborious detail, the feathers of the angels' wings are indicated rather than drawn.

The differences here represent the normal progress of a painter from a more detailed to a more summary treatment, and may be noted in the case of other artists besides Rembrandt. The peculiarities in colour and handling that were more specially his own are in the main independent of chronology. Certain schemes of tinting, certain effects of chiaroscuro, which distinguish Rembrandt, are found early and are found late, and do not belong exclusively to any special epochs. It was not really in accordance with Rembrandt's genius to bind himself, as more systematic workers have done, to paint in this or that particular fashion. As each subject struck him it would suggest its own treatment, and this treatment might vary from piece to piece, or vary within the four corners of a single canvas.

It is a commonplace of Rembrandt criticism that the prevailing hue in his works is a deep warm brown, with half-tones and lights tending to amber and gold, but upon this it is to be noticed that in the earlier work up to about 1635 the prevailing hue is much cooler than it becomes at a later period. A cold bluey grey is much in evidence in early works like the St. Anastatius at Stockholm of 1631, and is still very marked in a picture as late as the 'Sacrifice of Isaac.' The golden brown is on the whole however characteristic, and in many pieces both early and late local differences of hue can hardly be said to exist, so subordinate are they to this general effect. We have to look closely to see that the piece is not really a study

in monochrome. This applies to pictures as a whole and to heads taken singly. For example, the head of Nicolaes Bruyningh at Cassel, one unsurpassed in Rembrandt's work for the glamour of its chiaroscuro and its expression, is modelled almost entirely in a carefully kneaded impasto of golden browns paling towards the lights, with hardly a touch of what are conventionally termed 'carnations.' This comparative suppression of local tints is a phenomenon that meets us at every period of Rembrandt's artistic career, but at no period is it universal. The 'Bruyningh' belongs to the fifties, but the famous portrait of Jan Six, ascribed to about the same period, is painted in a totally different method, and with considerable variety of local flesh tints. The 'Hendrickje' of the Salon Carré of the Louvre is a study in golden browns, but the contemporary 'Hendrickje,' in a white wrapper, shown by Mr. Charles Morrison at Burlington House in 1899, is much more varied in hue.

In the matter of positive tints, in his early work Rembrandt shows a predilection for a cool violet. This colour relieves the blacks in the 'Anatomy' at the Hague, makes the Oldenburg 'Mother' sumptuous, and is the tint of the mantle by which the 'Proserpina' of Berlin is being clutched by her agonized attendants. In the 'Simeon' of the Hague, Plate 2, though the general hue is brown, yet in the group in the foreground on which the light falls there is no little brilliance of local tints. Mary is in light blue, the standing priest in purple, while Simeon wears a dress of gold over violet. These comparatively cool tints are exchanged as time goes on for warmer ones, and in the later periods a rich crimson, with very fine reds between crimson and scarlet and crimson and salmon

colour, are predominant. The very late pieces, the 'Jewish Bride' of the van der Hoop collection, the 'Family' at Brunswick, and the 'Return of the Prodigal' at St. Petersburg, contain splendid passages of red. In the second of these, on the whole Rembrandt's masterpiece of colouring, the dress of the mother varies according to the incidence of the light from a deep scarlet to a blood-red, while the baby on her knee wears a robe of a more pinky shade inclining in parts to salmon colour, and there are few colour effects in painting more sumptuous (postea, p. 314f.). In the 'Prodigal,' Bode notes how 'the pomp and power of colour is the bond of union of the composition, the animating force of the representation,' and 'fills the scene with a depth and solemnity of feeling, which make this picture one of the most profoundly moving even of Rembrandt's works.'[1] The glowing richness of the crimson Oriental table-cloth in the 'Syndics' will be remembered by all. The coverlet in the beautiful 'Blessing of Jacob' at Cassel is of the same hue.

It is not only the reds that are prominent in Rembrandt's later work. Some of the finest passages of colour are those in which tawny umber tones are predominant, broken with greens and warmed by occasional touches of red. Nearly all the pictures of the second half of his career contain these passages, and they are especially effective in the 'Family,' and the van der Hoop piece. The so-called 'Burgomaster' of the National Gallery, No. 1674, depends largely for its beauty on this scheme of colour, and the same may be said of the magnificent self-portrait of 1658 in the possession of Lord Ilchester.

1 *Complete Work*, VII, 25.

It has been already noted that it was not the pigments but their manipulation that was the secret of the colour effects secured, and this brings us to what is perhaps the most characteristic side of Rembrandt's art—his actual handling of the brush.

It has been noticed above that the artists of the Flemish school, at any rate in the seventeenth century, had their own methods of painting solidly into transparent rubbings. This was the method of Rubens and his followers, and we find it practised also by Frans Hals, who though a Dutchman was born in Antwerp, and by Adriaen Brouwer who was probably his pupil and though a Fleming lived in his early days at Haarlem. It was not however the characteristic method of the Dutch school in general, and Rembrandt did not practise it, save, as we shall see, exceptionally. As a rule Rembrandt covered his canvas with a full, sometimes a thick, impasto, which varied in texture and composition, but was as a rule homogeneous, and the same in the shadowed parts as in the lights. It is indeed a special characteristic of the master that he paints as solidly in the one case as in the other, and the so-called 'Polish Noble' at St. Petersburg, really a self-portrait, is a capital example. This piece is well known, at any rate from reproductions, and all who have admired it must have noted the strength and solidity of the modelling on the shaded side of the head. At the same time in his earliest work Rembrandt does incline to the Flemish technique, and the practice of loading the lights and leaving in the shadows little more than a thin rubbing is quite characteristic of his earliest essays. In the 'Simeon' of the Hague, it can be seen that the ample masses of the architecture in the

background are all painted in with a rich transparent brown pigment, while details are struck out with touches of paint mixed with white. There is something in the effect of this displeasing to the eye, for the opaque pigment does not seem to harmonize with the transparent, and we are reminded of a saying ascribed to Rubens that in the shadow parts of a picture, white, that is the opaque medium, is a poison.

It is interesting to note that in some later works Rembrandt adheres to the early practice. He does so in the two fine landscapes at Brunswick of about 1640, and at Cassel of some ten years later. We see in these, and especially in the first, that Rembrandt was not quite happy in the use of this process, and a comparison of his work with the fine Teniers at Cassel, the 'Bath-house,' No. 147, shows how much better the Flemish master understood the art of combining harmoniously the two kinds of pigment. In the Brunswick landscape Rembrandt has painted the whole foreground in shadow, with the unctuous, transparent, brown pigment, but in the delineation of objects such as a house, a horse with his rider, and the like, he has failed to give them the requisite force and relief. They are rather the dark and somewhat treacly ghosts of objects, than objects of the solidity we look for in a foreground. In the later Cassel piece, one of the very finest of his composed landscapes, he has corrected this fault and painted into the brown rubbing in most parts, though not in all, with solid pigment.

We pass now to a consideration of Rembrandt's normal technique, which was characterized by great solidity. Various writers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth

century have left us critical notes on his practice, and while they all lament the commonness of his types, his careless outlines and the absence of classic grace in his design, they are equally confident in their praise of his colouring and in the respectful recognition they give to his bold and novel methods of laying paint on canvas. More than one compares his colouring to that of Titian. 'Ses carnations,' remarks de Piles, 'ne sont pas moins vrayes, moins fraîches, ni moins recherchées dans les sujets qu'il a représentez que celles du Titien,'[1] and he goes on to draw a comparison between their styles of execution, pointing out that they mixed their tints rather on the canvas itself than on the palette, and allowed 'virgin tints' to stand side by side in their work confident that at the proper focal distance they would blend to the exact hue required. Titian, he continues, fused his tints more than Rembrandt, whose brush strokes are very distinct when looked at from a near standpoint. These same 'grands coups de pinceau' are noticed at an earlier date by Félibien, in his *Entretiens*, published in 1685. 'Souvent,' he says of Rembrandt, 'il ne faisoit que donner de grands coups de pinceau, et coucher ses couleurs fort épaisses, les unes auprès des autres, sans les noyer et les adoucir ensemble.'[2] Baldinucci also writes of Rembrandt's 'colpi strapazzati' 'careless strokes.' These expressions may easily give a false idea of Rembrandt's normal handling. Sometimes we find him painting with the distinct strokes that are as a rule more characteristic of Hals, and the most striking example is the face of the Jan Six portrait, noticed postea, p. 319f. These touches are however very carefully and precisely laid, and

[1] *Urkunden*, p. 440. [2] *Urkunden*, p. 417.

can certainly not be called by the epithet 'strapazzati,' which implies a certain brutality in freedom. On the other hand there are a few later Rembrandts that do exhibit a careless ease that might be so denominated, and a specimen may be seen in the 'Homer' which Dr. Bredius has lent to the Mauritshuis at the Hague. The handling here is dashing and broken to an extent seldom seen. The 'Civilis' at Stockholm, postea, p. 312 f., might be quoted in the same connection. The use of the palette-knife in the painting of drapery is very apparent in one or two of the latest pieces in which Rembrandt has indulged his taste for sumptuous colouring.

None of these methods of handling can be described as really characteristic of the master. As a general rule he kneads his impasto into a rather closely compacted mass, in which the different tones and hues play into each other freely with a look of openness and ease, while the texture is homogeneous. In one of his very latest masterpieces, the 'Family' at Brunswick, postea, p. 314 f., though it is as a whole so largely handled that it is termed 'unfinished,' yet the principal face, that of the mother, is firmly and even closely modelled. In other works of the late period, remarkable for the handling of oil paint, though the texture is equally homogeneous it is not so close. Bode speaks of a 'soft "buttery" impasto' as characteristic of the works from about 1645 to 1659 and in contrast describes the painting of the heads in the 'Syndics' of 1661 as 'loose and granular.'[1] Other epithets could equally well be applied to the various masterpieces which belong to the later years of the painter's career, and the lover of the art may be

1 *Complete Work*, vol. VII, p. 3.

strongly urged to study from this point of view good examples of Rembrandt's painting from the fifties and sixties, and to distinguish the very varied methods of handling which they will reveal to him. As Bode has well said, 'his treatment of the carnations is ever new and varied; with all his loading, splashing, enamelling, stippling, smearing, and working up of his rich colour, his manner is always full of a rich individuality of imagination.'[1]

An analysis, necessarily very imperfect, has been offered of Rembrandt's pictorial achievement from the points of view of conception and treatment and technique. We must now again bring before our minds his pictures, treating each of them as an artistic whole, and must ask the question, What is their personal appeal to us as creations of genius? At the outset of this study there was claimed for Rembrandt 'a power that is the truest test of greatness, the power of kindling in us by his art a glow of admiration that is not cooled by a dispassionate review of his imperfections.' We have now at the close of it, when some description and analysis have been applied to his works, to consider what there is in them that gives them their value in our eyes.

A few of the artist's acknowledged masterpieces of painting in different kinds may be selected for this purpose.

Let us look first carefully, and with the aid of a magnifying glass, at the small picture of 'The Labourers in the Vineyard,' in the Hermitage, Plate 39. Why is it called in the catalogue 'un des plus ravissants tableaux de moindre dimensions que Rembrandt ait jamais peints'?

[1] Ibid. p. 20.

PLATE 35. THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD

St Petersburg

First, because of its glowing amber tints, that are never hot or 'foxy' and that are relieved by passages of cool colour like the blue-green robe of the principal figure; next, because of its execution, which is at once soft and firm with character in every touch, rendering the minutest detail without loss of breadth, never meticulous in its sharp delineation, never vague in its melting outlines and elusive suggestion of forms half seen, half hidden in the shadows. We look nearer, and note on the left, under and beside the window, a pile of books and bales and other still-life objects that are as nicely delineated as if Dou had held the brush, but without a trace of the wiry thinness and commonplace precision of the pupil. The window, where a blue sky is seen through the lattice-work, the bars of which are touched as if by a de Hooch, sheds its light upon the principal group where the main interest is concentrated. The figure of the clerk bending across the table directs our attention hither, where we see the lord of the vineyard with his homely benevolent face engaged with two of the labourers. The action is wrongly described in the Hermitage Catalogue. The labourer at the back who is taking off his cap has a piece of money in his left hand, and is no doubt the one hired at the eleventh hour. The man seen in profile, who holds out his left hand in an attitude of protest, is the one who has borne the burden and heat of the day. His face is excellent, and the contrast of his expression of protest with the humble and deprecating but grateful air of the other is in Rembrandt's happiest vein. A discussion on the subject is going on in the background and other figures are busy with casks and bales. A cat in the foreground has just

captured a mouse, and a dog is languidly watching the operation. The colour, the light and shade, the handling, the homelike aspect of the interior, the clear and natural presentment of the situation, the suggestion in the figure of the lord of a higher ethical interest—all these elements in the piece combine to give us that feeling of perfect satisfaction which we find in the easy greatness of a true master.

If we pass round the screen on which hangs this little masterpiece, we are at once face to face with a Rembrandt picture that strikes us perhaps beyond any other of his works with a sense of his greatness as a painter. The reference is to the superb so-called 'Danaë,' shown on Plate 40.

There are certain of Rembrandt's canvases that we cannot regard as in the ordinary sense pictures. They show little of that decent reverence for Nature, whom Lionardo has called 'the mistress of all masters,' that sits so becomingly on the modest servant of the universal queen! Rather are they defiances of Nature, the embodiment of visions 'far beyond mortal thought' or experience. In their strength, their richness, their variety, and at the same time their masterful ease and repose, they surpass all that we have seen in Nature, and confront us as a new manifestation of the elemental force that made the world. In face of such pieces we find ourselves repeating the words of Hoogstraten about the 'Night Watch,' that possessed a vitality which made all other pictures look like coloured cards.

The 'Danaë' is ascribed to 1636, and the date is fairly legible, though it seems early for a work of such vigour.

PLATE 10.—DANAÉ

What the subject is still remains uncertain, and on this controverted question there is a good note in the Catalogue of the Hermitage. For the lover of art it is quite sufficient to see that the picture represents a comely woman ripe for love and expectant of her mate. Saskia probably served as model, and the forms of the nude are more delicate than is often the case with the master. As a study in light-and-shade and colour the piece is almost overpowering in its splendour. There is considerable variety in the carnations, the coral reds on cheek and knee and finger-tips give life to the broad scheme of golden lights and half-tones and reflexes that play over the rounded torso and limbs. These warm hues are thrown up by the whites and cool shadows of the bed-linen, over which the light plays in a magical fashion to which no words can do justice. It is a veritable apotheosis of bed-clothes; and the possibilities of beauty in white linen under light-and-shade, and of luxurious softness in plume pillows, have never before and never since been so seen and shown. This pure and brilliant fountain of light and colour springs from the midst of warm olive-greens through which there runs a note of crimson. The bed-hangings are green, the coverlet a deep orange red, the carpet in front of the bed a light greeny blue, and the fantastic carving of the bedstead golden with deep amber shades. The cover of the small table to the right is embroidered with gold on crimson and the colour is carried through by the cherry-red bows upon the bracelets to the cap of the old woman which is a subdued sanguine hue. Not the least beautiful passage of colour is the grey wall seen through the opening in the bed curtains.

Taken in itself the 'Danaë' is a picture absolutely of the first order, representing the art of painting at its zenith; yet when we compare the figure that gives the piece its name and character with a later effort in the nude of about twenty years after, we see that the art of Rembrandt could rise, as it were, above itself, and carry us to a height of pictorial achievement from which even the 'Danaë' looks immature. The reference is to the world-famous 'Bathsheba' of the Louvre of 1654. See Plate 41. This picture was till recent days the glory of the Salle la Caze, where it filled the spacious room like an imperial presence. More lately, all the Rembrandts of the Collection, save the 'Girl' of the Salon Carré, have been hidden away in mean little cupboards round the skirts of the huge Rubens hall, in which they waited till the administration was able to house them in fitting surroundings. When any judge of pictures penetrated to those recesses, he satisfied himself at a glance that this one piece was worth all the Luxembourg Rubenses many times over, for we possess in it one of the exceptional efforts of Rembrandt's genius, in which he reveals to us new possibilities in the painter's art. It is not a perfect picture, for as was noticed before, ante, p. 86, parts of the figure, which is Hendrickje's, are drawn and modelled with that comparative carelessness for form which we have seen cause more than once to criticize in the master. The head and the bust and the arms are however in this respect beyond reproach, and there is nothing here in the form to mar our delight in Rembrandt's distinctive rendering of the hues and texture of flesh. The colour and light-and-shade are on the one side forced into richness and glow by the contrast with the cool white of the linen on

PLATE 41. BATHSHEBA

Louvre

To face p. 519

which the lady sits and rests her arm, and on the other side they are made to look more subtle, more pearly, more delicate, through the juxtaposition in the background of the magnificent robe of deepest oriental colouring. The sensitive mobile integument seems to quiver as the blood pulsates in the veins, and the softness of the flesh invites the touch. It is the body of the 'Danaë' transfigured. There is the life, the soul, that we now see in looking back were wanting to that lovely frame, and one of the greatest painters of the world is for the moment greater than himself.

The study is evidently a 'Bathsheba,' for the letter she holds in her hand is meant to be from the king; and the Eastern beauty sits there glowing from her bath, while her attendant finishes the toilette of her feet. The face is a study of expression, as well as a lovely masterpiece of modelling and colour. It is pensive but tender; doubting and yet obedient to love's behest. It is worthy of note that, to judge from sundry indications in the picture, the 'Danaë' is meant to convey the suggestion of venal love, the 'Bathsheba' of love that is frankly sinful; and yet Rembrandt has treated both pieces with that Shakespearian breadth which lifts them above any associations of the kind. Just as in Dante's lines about Francesca da Rimini the word 'amor' fills the air, and transforms into its own note of infinite yearning every word of reproof or reprobation that could be uttered, so these pictures, 'all breathing human passion, show us love that not only subdues but glorifies the heart of woman, and is for her the eternal verity.

From the technical point of view the 'Danaë' is still a picture of the early prime, and the handling though open

and light is very simple and controlled. The 'Bathsheba' is mature but though freely touched and of infinite subtlety is by no means loose in manipulation. We may now transfer ourselves in thought to Stockholm where in the gallery we are faced by that magnificent torso the 'Civilis' of 1660–2. It is another of the pieces in which the effect of light and colour is of overpowering splendour, but it is handled in a much looser and more sketchy fashion than either of the pictures just described, as suited a decorative piece that was to be looked at from some distance. The 'Civilis' is a mere fragment, but by the aid of extant sketches we can reconstruct the whole of which the central portion only has come down to us. The picture was one of the rare public commissions Rembrandt received, and was ordered of him about 1660. It was for the decoration of one of the lunettes in the great gallery of the Town Hall, now the Palace, at Amsterdam, and covered some twenty-five square metres of canvas. As the position was an unfavourable one in the matter of lighting, a summary method of treatment was demanded, and to judge from what is left the work would have answered exactly to the conditions imposed. It did not however suit the taste of the civic authorities of the hour, and was taken down after it had been exhibited for a while in its place.[1] In any case it was left on the artist's hands, and at some unknown date was cut down, the central portion, containing the principal group of figures, being alone preserved. This has found its way to the National Museum at Stockholm, and measures some ten feet by seven. (See Plate 42.)

[1] No. 249 of the *Urkunden* gives the account of one who actually saw the work in position.

PLATE 42.—THE CONJURATION OF CLAUDIUS CIVILIS

Stockholm

To face p. 312

The subject, as has now been ascertained from documents, was the conjuration of Claudius Civilis and his Batavians against the Romans,[1] and the chieftain with his associates were seated at a table by night, swearing on their swords an oath of union against the common foe. In the complete composition, known from a drawing at Munich, reproduced in Michel's *Rembrandt*, page 469, this table was at the top of a broad flight of steps, at the two ends of which subsidiary figures serving as repoussoirs were standing, while above the table rose the walls and roof of a vast vaulted hall, with arched openings under the vaults. The whole was evidently lighted solely by torches blazing on the table and screened from the spectator by figures on the nearer side of the board. The effect of this lighting, with the scheme of colouring dependent on it, is in the central portion so extraordinary that the imagination fails to grasp what it must have been when the lighted portion was set like 'Danaë' amid her dark bed-curtains, as a brilliant jewel coruscating in the midst of great spaces half-lighted and in gloom, after the fashion Rembrandt loved. Here was an opportunity for the creation on a colossal scale of one of those supernatural effects of light-and-shade and colour of which he alone of painters has held the secret, and the practical destruction of the picture is an irreparable loss.

What remains of the work however exercises a potent fascination. It is difficult to leave it, for every moment some new subtlety in the colouring becomes apparent. There is a long table that we look up to from below, and on the other side of it are seated the chieftain Civilis, in a

1 Tacitus, *Histories*, VI. 13 f.

curious tiara-like cap and robes shimmering with amber and blue, and seven associates, the nearer of whom are stretching out their swords to touch that of the leader. There is great variety of type among these, devised with Rembrandt's tactful sense of contrast. The figure nearest Civilis to the right is that of an aged woman. A young girl is one of the three dark figures on the hither side of board who mask the light. The colouring is all in a key of gold and amber with contrasting bluey greys, and the tints, broken and blended with a freedom of handling to which even Rembrandt's work supplies few parallels, show nowhere any patch that is in the least degree muddy or inharmonious. The table cloth that hangs down in the shadowed side of the table is a picture in itself, though absolutely plain.

As a study in colour the 'Civilis' may stand beside the two pictures which every Rembrandt lover would single out as more rich and glowing, more magical in the handling of loosely compacted pigment than any others. They are the so-called 'Jewish Bride' in the van der Hoop collection in the Museum at Amsterdam, and the 'Family' at Brunswick. They are among the master's latest works, and their brilliancy is hard to reconcile with the popular notion that Rembrandt's misfortunes must have shadowed his art as well as his life.

Of the two pictures just mentioned, the Brunswick 'Family' is the less well known and may be selected as one of the masterpieces by which Rembrandt has engraved his name so deeply on the annals of art. It is one of the very last of his achievements, and we see in it, as in the van der Hoop piece, and the 'Prodigal' at St. Petersburg,

PLATE 13.—THE FAMILY
Brunswick

To face p. 314

the genius of the sublime painter setting amidst the clouds of glory of a waning sunset. Plate 43 gives the composition. A mother holds on her lap a baby, the somewhat pronounced features of whom one could wish made more infantile. Two other children stand at her knee and the father of the brood, a sober man in black, wearing on his face a half smile of contentment, stands a little behind. The expressions are nicely varied. The baby, as is a baby's wont, is a little thoughtful, but the older child behind it wears a merry smile, that contrasts again with the gravity of the little girl who holds a basket and is conscious of the weight of domestic cares. The gestures are happy, and the figures come together in composition in the most natural manner. The figures are life-size and seen to the knees; the canvas measures about 4 ft. by 6 ft.

The picture is one of those popularly termed 'unfinished,' but finish with Rembrandt meant something different from the finish of an essentially analytical painter like Holbein, and Houbraken has preserved for us a remark of the artist on this subject to the effect that 'a picture is finished when the master has realized his own intention in it.'[1] We must accept here every part of the picture as carrying out the intention of the artist. The face of the mother is in the conventional sense 'finished' in every part, but her fichu and her dress are played over with a rapid but not hasty brush that creates with a touch the thin crinkly fabric of the lawn, the thicker folds of the glowing crimson robe. The hand of the child laid caressingly on her bosom is most beautifully rendered and is as lovely and in the best sense as finished a bit of painting as any in his

[1] *Urkunden*, p. 466.

work, while the hand of the mother is sketched in quite a summary fashion. Again, the face, which is partly in shadow, of the older girl on the left is, as the Gallery catalogue expresses it, 'only laid in,' but if we look at her dress, we see a part of the picture on which the painter has lavished the utmost care. The quality of colour and execution is of the finest, and the harmony of the golden browns and greys as carefully studied as any passage in his work as a whole.

In points of treatment like these the picture repays the most careful examination, but for the present purpose it is enough to regard it from the side of its colouring. The grey greens and warmer hues from gold to brown, on the dresses of the two older children and the basket of flowers, form a setting to the salmon-red glistening with sheeny lights of the baby's frock, and are balanced on the other side by the full crimson-scarlets of the robe of the mother. The black of the dress of the father, and the very dark olive greens and browns of the background, in which bushes are discernible, give repose to the whole. How full and rich and rounded are the forms; how the touches of light sparkle on the little bits of jewel and lace and chiffon; how massive and imposing is the general effect! Never were the resources of oil-paint as a vehicle of artistic expression more convincingly demonstrated.

In colour rather less sumptuous and more like the 'Civilis' in its varied and lovely greys, is the 'Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph,' at Cassel, dating from 1656, Plate 44. The old patriarch is half rising in his bed affectionately supported by his son, and places his hand in benediction on the head of one of the two children, who,

watched by their mother, are kneeling by the bed-side. There is about the piece an epic breadth and serenity, and the characterization of the figures is carried far enough to give to each of them life and individuality while the quiet of the scene is undisturbed. The old man and the son, how perfectly their mutual love and confidence is conveyed! What contrast could be more effective than that between the elder boy whose tender grace reminds us of Lionardo's angel in Verrocchio's 'Baptism,' and the younger, more homely, dark-haired urchin, whose face is like a ripe apple! The mother is grave and a little withdrawn from the inner circle of those akin in blood. If in the 'Danaë' we find a splendid idealization of the bed of love, there is here an equally noble treatment of the bed of rest, the last home of the aged, round which gather the young ones who are to carry on the race. The dark curtain on the left and the rich red of the coverlet in front frame between them a lovely vision of light and colour, full of delicate harmonies of tone and hue. The handling is free, but the impasto smooth and well kneaded. The dresses of Joseph and his wife are however somewhat smeary, and look really unfinished.

A glance at two portraits, one male and one female, of great technical interest and beauty, will prepare us for a brief study of the last of the pictures here adduced, the monumental 'Syndics.' The two portraits are the 'Jan Six' of the Six Collection at Amsterdam, and the 'Hendrickje Stoffels' of the Salon Carré of the Louvre. Neither picture is actually dated, but they were probably painted in the early fifties. Six, who in life does not seem to have approved of Hendrickje, will here perforce have to yield place to the lady.

Rembrandt's friends in general, who knew or had heard of Hendrickje Stoffels as the painter's kitchen wench and concubine, must have found it hard to recognize her if they ever saw this fairy princess, who holds court now in the Louvre, and in the most famous picture room in the world takes her full meed of the homage she shares with Titian's 'Lady with the Mirror' and the 'Mona Lisa' of Lionardo (see Plate 14, ante, p. 86). Fromentin has put the bold question whether the Rembrandt really matches the Titian and the Lionardo, and his answer shall be given in a rendering of his own language. 'The ideal of Rembrandt was light. It was the glow around objects, a gleam against a background of shadow. This is something fleeting, doubtful; of traits illusive that will be gone before we fix them; a thing of the moment, phantasmal. To arrest the vision, to plant it on the canvas, to give it form and relief while preserving its airy texture and keeping its brilliance undimmed, to make it a solid, virile, substantial thing of paint as real as any other, that will sustain the proximity of a Rubens, a Titian, a Veronese, a Giorgione, a Vandyke —this is what Rembrandt has attempted. Has he succeeded? The testimony of the world has answered, Yes!'[1]

Of all the Rembrandt pictures that are generally known this is probably with most people the favourite. As if the artist had been conscious of the future destiny of his picture he has imparted to it more of that intrinsic comeliness of aspect which we associate with Italian art. Though conforming in this respect, it is at the same time one of the most individual of all the master's works, indeed

[1] *Les Maîtres d'Autrefois*, p. 411.

PLATE 31.—JACOB BLESSING THE CHILDREN OF JOSEPH
Cassel

To face p. 318

the quintessence of all that is most Rembrandt-like in his painting. The glamour of the jewels that flash here and there in dress or hair, the gradual growing-out of the largely moulded plastic form from the darkness, the amber and gold that flood the scene and almost banish local differences of hue—all these are Rembrandt's own, and they give the key-note to the whole impressionist school, that looks to Rembrandt as to one of its heads. At the same time there is nothing in the piece in the least forced or theatrical. It is a work of style and not of manner. The universal qualities of all great painting are there behind the personal expression.

We shall see that the 'Six' portrait is equally great in its own way but not nearly so individual in its pictorial statement.

Of the 'Six' portrait, Plate 45, a brief notice has already been given, ante, p. 304. Like the 'Family' at Brunswick it is popularly termed 'unfinished,' and the reader may take it that such pieces are particularly worthy of his careful study. It is really finished with perfect art in every detail, but then every detail is treated in accordance with a general scheme in which the effect of the whole is the only thing considered. If the picture be scanned piecemeal many sage remarks may be made about the summary or sketchy handlings of the parts, which would never occur to the spectator who regards the whole as a unity from the correct focal distance.

The picture is apparently painted *alla prima*, at a single sitting, with rapidity but not with haste.

Six, who was then aged about thirty-six, was not yet burgomaster but filled one of the minor municipal offices.

Rembrandt has painted him at half-length wearing his hat and in the act of drawing on one of his gloves as if he were about to leave the house. A red cloak with gold braiding is thrown over the left shoulder, and the rest of the attire is grey. The background is a plain dark grey with no objects or inscription. Rembrandt has made the sitter look far too old—Smith estimated his age at about sixty—and this look depends a good deal on the deep markings about the chin, which occur, it may be noticed, in the Hermitage picture of 1637 (ante, p. 254) in which Rembrandt has in the same way made himself look aged beyond his years. The simplicity and ease of the pose and the look of reflection in the face, so quiet in expression and yet almost startlingly life-like, make this one of the finest portraits in the world. It is interesting to compare it with another work of great pictorial genius, struck out in a few hours of intensest artistic activity, the 'Mr. Gladstone' of John Everitt Millais, now in the London National Gallery. The 'Six' possesses an artistic quality to which, owing to defective education, Millais never attained. It shows in every part beneath the light elusive touches of the flying brush the stern solidity of form. It is here that the men of the seventeenth century have the advantage over the most gifted moderns. Their touches, however free and apparently wayward, are exactly in the right place, and the colour is heightened or subdued to exactly the correct tone. Hence a plastic fulness and firmness of shape reveals itself beneath the play of light and colour, and we find ourselves saying before their works, how solid, how true, how masterly! So exact in these respects of placing and tone is every broad or delicate brushmark on the face and form

of the sitter, that Six in living form stands before us, and, were the picture placed beside the 'Gladstone,' the vigour and massiveness of the delineation would reduce the brilliant modern study to a shadow.

The crown of the black hat is just visible against the dark background, and the swinging curve of the brim is brought effectively away by just one faint streak of light on its nearer edge. The face is painted, so far as one can see, rather in the manner of Hals, with a series of direct square touches very varied in colour but combining to give the broad effect of a manly countenance of sanguine type. It is framed in the curls of an ample light-brown wig very softly modelled, to which touches of stronger colour give richness and variety. The brow, under the shadow of the hat, seems slightly knit with thought, and the eyes look out from the shade grave and thoughtful as of a man going forth to serious public business demanding balance of judgment. The cherry reds, warm golden browns, and greeny greys are laid freely but not loosely over the original rubbings and the drawing and modelling of the head strike the eye as nature itself. The right hand is executed in the same technique but in looser more sketchy fashion as suits the general scheme. The coat is of a plain self-colour, and save for its gold buttons, it is painted as simply as the background, while the cloak over the left shoulder, of a red inclining to brick colour, is superbly handled. The few folds are broadly marked in sweeping strokes of grey, but the artist has stretched his powers to the utmost in his rendering of the gold embroidery of the cloak, the buttons of the coat, and above all the hands, with the gloves and the ruffles on the wrists. The wonder of the whole piece

is the way these details carry the light through it, so that it sparkles with gleams and shadows and yet keeps as a whole its smooth full plastic roundness and unity. The white collar—a single fold of linen—semi-transparent, comes out into strong illumination, and the light slides from it to the collar of the cloak on the left shoulder, where it is concentrated for a moment on some metal buttons on the inner side just where the cloak turns over. It then springs across to the right arm where it glints upon some gold embroidery on the sleeve, and then revels among the crinkling folds of the cambric ruffles which are touched with an ease and lightness of hand than neither Hals nor Velasquez could surpass. The ruffle on the other wrist coaxes the light over again to the left, where it boldly descends to one or two of the frogs of gold braid on the lower part of the cloak just by the frame. If we look closely we see that these frogs are each put in with one stroke of the brush, generally in exact tone, while a touch of the thumb plainly to be detected is sometimes used to suppress a too obtrusive dab of the golden yellow pigment. The buttons on the coat are each put in with a blob and a circular twist of the brush, leaving the exact amount of light for the position in regard to the general modelling of the figure.

It is to be noted that these points or streaks of light are not strung together on a sweeping curve, as is recommended in 'first lessons on composition,' but are subtly distributed as if they had fallen here and there by chance. They illumine the whole piece, but with an art that effectually conceals its artfulness they combine to produce that harmony of effect which gives the portrait its pictorial

PLATE 15.—PORTRAIT OF JAN SIX

Six Collection, Amsterdam

To face p. 22

value. Again, the red of the cloak is not in the orthodox way 'carried through' the composition, for the colour occurs nowhere else on the canvas. It is the combination of simplicity and directness with accomplished science that gives the picture so high a place. We look in vain for any of the master's established conventions, for concentration of light, for golden glow, for loaded impasto; Rembrandt here transcends the Rembrandtesque and creates as simply and easily as nature itself.

The same impression of ease, of inevitableness, we receive from the great picture of the 'Syndics,' which has been already adduced as representing the culmination of the master's achievement.

The composition of the picture, Plate 16, ante, p. 98, is familiar to all lovers of art and may appear like a matter of course. In reality the interpretation of the piece is not quite so simple and straightforward as it seems. Corporation pictures generally presuppose some spectator, before whom the figures in the piece are making as good an appearance as they can, but the spectator is not part of the company, but the ideal looker-on who is outside its ranks though interested in the show it presents. A moment's attention to the 'Syndics' will show that it presents peculiarities in its arrangement which distinguish it from such pieces in general. The figures seem unmistakeably to be concerning themselves with others who are in the same company but in another part of the room. It is not merely that they are looking at the ideal spectator, in the recognized traditional manner, but they have to do with some definite personages present but outside the picture. Bürger, and after him Blanc, Neumann, and others, have

reconstructed the scene by supposing the five officials of the Clothmakers' Company to be present on the daïs at a meeting attended by other members with whom they are discussing some matter of common interest. The central figure is presiding and has the book of accounts open before him, but he appears to be offering some explanation or remonstrance to an interpellator in the body of the hall, on whom also his brother officials are directing their eyes. It may even be suggested that the figure who has risen from his chair has done so to get a better sight of the troublesome individual, and to say something about him in the ear of the president, whereas the figure on the other side of the latter who holds a page of the book is half smiling as if he thought lightly of the interruption. It is right to say that other critics see no sign of this little drama and imagine the figures to be merely regarding the ideal spectator. This, for example, is the view of Michel, and of the authors of the Rijks Museum Catalogue. The present writer is influenced in favour of the former view by a fact, to which attention does not seem generally paid, that the perspective of the top of the table shows that the figures are on a daïs and are looked up to from below. Now the 'ideal spectator' is usually placed opposite a normal point of sight, about on a level with the eyes of the chief personages in the picture. In this case, on the contrary, he appears to be below in the body of the hall and to be one of a company really present at the scene. That there should be a doubt on this matter is a proof how tactfully Rembrandt has treated the situation. Any over-emphasis on the momentary transaction would have carried him in the direction of the 'Night Watch,' and

would have broken the repose which is the quality in the piece most worthy of note.

The action, such as it is, is confined to the three central figures, and the older man on the left and the younger and florid personage on the right correspond closely in pose and expression, and steady the composition. There is a curious statement current that the latter holds a bag in his hand that would contain the seal affixed by these officials to the cloth that passed their scrutiny. It is clear however that what he holds are his gloves, and the supposed bag is only their embroidered cuffs. The background is warm-tinted wood panelling and against this the painter has thrown his masses of black and red. The latter colour, save for some touches on two of the chairs, is confined to the table-cover where it glows deeply on the front which is in the shadow, but kindles into scarlet at the left hand side where it confronts the light. The dresses and hats are uniformly black, and each of the figures, even the serving-man, wears a broad white linen collar on which the painter has allowed the light to work its will, without any thought of cautious 'toning down' or any apprehension that it would be too bright for the faces. So evenly is this light carried through the composition that it is as bright on the collars of the two outside figures as it is on that of the president. A touch of variety is artfully introduced by giving the three figures on the right ample wigs but leaving to the two on the left, a young man and an old, their own hair.

The faces are so handled that they can take care of themselves however much light and colour is displayed about them. The technique is quite different from that of the

portrait of Jan Six, for the impasto is thick and well kneaded, the paint rather granular in texture. There is variety however here, for the interesting face of the second from the right is touched more freely than the rest. The carnations are rich and full but not hot, the modelling is vigorous but at the same time soft and fleshy. Never were heads painted with such force, such science, and yet with such apparent simplicity and ease. With finest art the homely countenance of the attendant is made to enhance by contrast the dignity and weight of these representatives of a burgher aristocracy.

A selection has here been made of one or two works regarded as exceptional in their strength, whether in light-and-shade, in colour, in dignity of presentment, or in execution. This selection is of course arbitrary, and no two lovers of Rembrandt would single out the same pictures as representing to them the master's latest word. This fact is in itself significant. Rembrandt's art was intensely personal. Proceeding as it did from the artist's own individuality it makes to each student of it a personal appeal. Hence there is evoked in regard to Rembrandt a warmth of personal feeling that the lover of pictures does not so often feel before masterpieces of other practicians of the highest rank. No attempt has been made in these chapters to compare Rembrandt's achievement with that of the compeers of his own and the preceding century. The best of the Venetians, Rubens, Velasquez, Rembrandt, with one or two others hardly less great, form a galaxy from which each one may select his 'bright particular star' without any prejudice to the rest. A really

inspired piece of execution by Rubens will, as the phrase goes, 'carry us off our feet,' and the perfections of Velasquez give us the sense of communion with the immortals, but before one of the Rembrandts that makes to us the special personal appeal, the heart seems touched, the being suffused with a glow that seldom visits it when in presence of any other master. We more readily forgive Rembrandt his obvious faults than we do the fault of his compeers, because he seems to come nearer to us as a man. We may put the great Venetians for the moment aside, for all must acknowledge that they possess qualities in conception and design that none of their successors of the seventeenth century can match, but of all the seventeenth century masters there is no question that Rembrandt is first in penetration and sympathy, first that is in the qualities of intelligence and feeling, which, though they do not make an artist, yet go far to make him great. It is the general consciousness of these qualities in the background, so to say, of Rembrandt's art, that makes him such a favourite, and gives him the unique position among painters that he is as highly regarded by the intelligent public outside studio circles as he is by the modern professors of his art.

INDICES

I. THE WORKS OF REMBRANDT

The works of the master are arranged under the three headings, DRAWINGS, ETCHINGS, PAINTINGS, *and the examples are divided under each heading into the following groups:* (1) PORTRAIT STUDIES, (2) SELF-PORTRAITS, (3) SINGLE PORTRAITS, (4) PORTRAIT GROUPS, (5) CORPORATION PIECES, (6) RELIGIOUS COMPOSITIONS, (7) CLASSICAL, HISTORICAL OR ALLEGORICAL COMPOSITIONS, (8) NUDE STUDIES, (9) GENRE, (10) LANDSCAPE, (11) ANIMALS, (12) STILL LIFE. *Within each group the examples are arranged approximately in order of chronology.*

DRAWINGS

PORTRAIT STUDIES (*see* also SINGLE PORTRAITS and GENRE)

'Boy Reading' (Louvre), 116
'Titus van Rijn' (Stockholm), 87, 143; (Fodor Museum, Amsterdam), 143; (?) (Heseltine) (Albertina), 144
Male bust, resembling Jan Six (Six), 117, 127

SELF-PORTRAITS

Full length (Heseltine), 82, 114, 256
As Widower (?) (Heseltine), 143

SINGLE PORTRAITS (*see* also PORTRAIT STUDIES)

'Saskia,' silver point (Berlin), 64, 114
'Rumbartus van Rijn' (Stockholm), 140 f.
'Saskia ill,' 73, 142
Male Portrait (Holford Collection), 118
'Anslo' (British Museum) (E. de Rothschild), 126, 186
'Sylvius,' 127
'Geertgen Dircks' (?) (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), (British Museum), 78
Study for etching of Jan Six (Six), 127
'Mother of Jan Six' (Six), 99

PORTRAIT GROUPS

Not represented among drawings noticed in the text

CORPORATION PIECES

Study for Deyman 'Anatomy' (Six), 127
Study for one of the 'Syndics' (Amsterdam), 207

RELIGIOUS COMPOSITIONS

'Christ and the Disciples' (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), 118
'Isaac Blessing Jacob' (Chatsworth), 117
'Last Supper, The' (Dresden) (Berlin) (Louvre), 131
'Sacrifice of Isaac' (Stockholm), 136
'Joseph Telling his Dream' (Six), 133, 141

'Hagar and Ishmael,' 141
'Christ and Mary Magdalen' (de Groot), 137
'Daniel in the Lions' Den' (de Groot), 120
'Return of the Prodigal' (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), 141, 290
'Raising of Jairus' Daughter' (Berlin), 130
'Manoah's Offering' (Paris, Mathey), 138
'David's Reconciliation with Absalom' (de Groot), 136
'Deposition' (British Museum), 118, 218
'Departure of Prodigal Son' (Berlin), 135
'Christ with Martha and Mary' (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), 134
Study for 'Holy Family,' St. Petersburg (Heseltine), 142
'Family of Jacob' (Amsterdam), 117
'Christ Crowned with Thorns' (Chatsworth), 130
'Adoration of Shepherds' (Heseltine), 136
Study for '100 Florin Plate' (Berlin) 140, 181
'Vision of Daniel' (Bonnat), 136
'Christ giving Sight to a Blind Man' (Rotterdam), 129
'Christ and Peter on the Sea' (Salting), 129
'Christ Washing Peter's Feet' (Louvre) (Amsterdam), 132
'Family of Lot leaving Sodom' (Bibl. Nat. Paris), 134
'Tribute Money' (?) (Fodor Museum, Amsterdam), 282

CLASSICAL, HISTORICAL, OR ALLEGORICAL COMPOSITIONS

'Diana Bathing' (British Museum), 113, 138
'Ganymede' (Dresden), 138, 142
'Mercury and Argus' (Paris, Gay), 138
'Mars and Venus in the Net' (Fodor Museum, Amsterdam), 138
'Pyramus and Thisbe,' 139
'Philemon and Baucis' (Amsterdam), 138
'Jupiter and Antiope' (Paris, Gay) 138, 210
Studies for 'Civilis' (Munich), 127 313
'Diana and Actaeon' (Dresden), 139

NUDE STUDIES

Male nudes (Bonnat) (Louvre) (British Museum), 144; for etchings B. 193, 194 (Bibl. Nat. Paris) (British Museum), 144; Titus (?) (Heseltine) (Albertina), 144
Female nudes, 145; 'Diana Bathing' (British Museum), 113, 138; 'Jupiter and Antiope' (Paris, Gay), 138, 210; Saskia, for 'Susannah,' 146; Hendrickje, 145 f.; for etchings B. 197, 199, 200; 146; for etching of 'Artist Drawing from a Model' (British Museum), 146; for etching of 'Woman with an Arrow' (British Museum), 146. Geertgen Dircks (Heseltine), 146

GENRE (*see* also PORTRAIT STUDIES)

'Beggars' (Berlin) (British Museum), 139
'Three Beggars' (British Museum), 26, 117
'Pancake Woman,' 139
'Nursery Studies' (Stockholm, Vienna, Amsterdam, British Museum, &c.), 73, 141 f.
'Fractious Child' (Berlin), 142, 210
'Mother and Child' (British Museum), 141
'Sleeping Baby' (Heseltine), 142, 281
'Two Jews' (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), 140
'The Widower' (Heseltine), 143

LANDSCAPE

'Haarlem from the Dunes' (Heseltine), 125
'Town Gate' (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), 124
'Mill on Rampart' (Teyler Museum, Haarlem), 47

ANIMALS

Animal drawings, their number and kinds, 119 f.
'Elephant' (British Museum) (Albertina), 115 f., 174
'Lions,' 42 ; (Earl Brownlow), 116
'Daniel in Lions' Den' (de Groot), 120
'Swine' (Bonnat), 121
Horse, in 'Departure of Prodigal' (Berlin), 135

STILL LIFE

Not represented among drawings noticed in the text

ETCHINGS

PORTRAIT STUDIES (*see* also SINGLE PORTRAITS and GENRE)

'Harmen van Rijn,' Rembrandt's father, 50, 160
'Neeltjen van Rijn,' Rembrandt's mother, 51, 159, 160
'Rumbartus van Rijn,' 173
'Saskia,' 163 ; as 'Jewish Bride,' 163

SELF-PORTRAITS

As studies of expression, 160 f., 253
Bust of 1629, 159, 191
Half-length, of 1631, 161, 191
In military garb, of 1634, 161
With Saskia, 72, 162, 191
With feather in cap, of 1638, 161
Leaning on stone sill, of 1639, 161, 196
Drawing at a window, of 1648, 162, 168, 197
Study for above, 162
Drawing from Hendrickje (?) as model, 85, 175, 186

SINGLE PORTRAITS (*see* also PORTRAIT STUDIES)

'Sylvius, Jan,' 64
'Uytenbogaert, Jan,' 168, 169
'Manasseh ben Israel,' 169
'Uytenbogaert' (the Receiver), 166
'Anslo, Corn. Claesz.,' 126, 169
'Saskia ill,' 73, 163
'Sylvius, Jan,' 169, 268
'Asselijn, Jan,' 169
'Bonus, Ephraim,' 142, 169, 170, 197
'Six, Jan,' 94, 99, 169, 170, 171
'De Jonghe, Clement,' 168, 169, 171, 195
'Linden, Jan Antonides van den,' 169
'Coppenol' (Small), 169
'Haaring' (the Old), 94, 168, 169, 171, 195
'Haaring' (the Young), 94, 106, 168, 169
'Lutma, Jan,' 94, 169
'Tholinx, Arnoldus,' 94, 169, 195
'Francen, Abraham,' 32, 106, 169, 171
'Coppenol' (Large), 168, 169

PORTRAIT GROUPS
CORPORATION PIECES

Not represented among etchings noticed in the text

RELIGIOUS COMPOSITIONS

'Good Samaritan,' 157, 164
'Lazarus' (Large), 157, 283
'Taking Down from the Cross' (Large), 157
'Annunciation to the Shepherds,' 164, 176, 192, 248
'St. Jerome,' 119
'Ecce Homo' (High), 157, 218, 284
'Hagar's Departure,' 190
'Abraham Caressing Isaac,' 191
'Adam and Eve,' 119, 174
'Joseph Relating his Dream," 177
'Death of Mary,' 177, 191
'Presentation in the Temple' (Broad), 178
'Triumph of Mordecai,' 177
'Baptism of Eunuch,' 186, 191
'Madonna and Child in Clouds,' 282
'Lazarus' (Small), 177
'Procession to the Tomb,' 177
'Flight into Egypt,' 281
'100 Florin Plate' (Christ Healing the Sick), 66, 133, 140, 153, 162, 178, 179 f., 191, 197, 268, 283
'Blind Tobit,' 182 f.
'David Praying,' 182
'Christ as Teacher' ('La Petite Tombe,') 181
'Adoration of Shepherds,' 186
'Christ Appearing to the Disciples,' 185, 286
'Three Crosses,' 182, 184, 196, 284

'Christ in Temple,' 282
'St. Jerome' (unfinished), 120, 135, 167
'Christ with Parents,' 282
'Ecce Homo' (Broad), 182, 184, 194, 284
'Entombment,' 182, 184, 186
Illustrations to Book by Manasseh ben Israel, 169
'Sacrifice of Isaac,' 183
'Presentation in Temple' (High), 192 f., 196
'Descent from the Cross,' 184
'St. Francis' (unfinished), 167, 194
'Gethsemane,' 183
'New Testament' and 'Passion' series, of 1654, 183

CLASSICAL, HISTORICAL, OR ALLEGORICAL COMPOSITIONS

'Diana Bathing,' 113, 138, 163, 223
'Jupiter and Danaë,' 163, 176
'Marriage of Jason and Creusa' (Frontispiece to Six's *Medea*), 40, 99
'Faustus,' 167
'Jupiter and Antiope,' 139, 176, 210
Allegorical Etchings, 42

NUDE STUDIES

Male Nudes, 174 f.
Early Female Nudes ('Woman on Hillock') ('Diana Bathing') ('Jupiter and Danaë'), 163, 176, 223
'Adam and Eve,' 174
Rembrandt Drawing from a Female Model, 85, 175, 186
'Later Female Nudes, 175
'Woman at the Bath,' 175
'Woman by the Stove,' 175
'Negress (?) Lying Down,' 175
'Woman with the Arrow,' 176

GENRE (*see* also PORTRAIT STUDIES)

Beggars, Studies of, 162
'Seller of Rat Poison,' 163
'Pancake Woman,' 173, 191
'Quack Medicine Vendor,' 173
'Cardplayer,' 173
'Free' or 'Broad' Pieces, 185, 275 f.
'Beggars Receiving Alms at House Door,' 163, 173
'Synagogue,' 140, 173

LANDSCAPE

'Three Trees,' 122, 165, 167, 174, 188, 217, 249
'Mill,' 47, 165, 167, 195
'Cottages,' 165
'Omval,' 124, 166
'Bridge of Six,' 166, 191
'Gold-Weigher's Country Seat,' 166, 194
Dry-point of 1652, 194

ANIMALS

Lion (with St. Jerome), 119, do. (later), 119
'Lions,' 119 f.
'Lion Hunts,' 119
'The Hog,' 26, 121, 174, 195

STILL LIFE

'The Shell,' 173

PAINTINGS

PORTRAIT STUDIES (*see* also SINGLE PORTRAITS, and GENRE)

Their general character and place in his art, 48, 200, 206

(*Family Pieces*)

'Harmen van Rijn,' Rembrandt's father (Amsterdam) (Mr. W. Chamberlain, Brighton) (St. Petersburg) (Cassel) (Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna), 50, 202, 222
'Neeltjen van Rijn,' Rembrandt's mother (Oldenburg) (Vienna) (The Hague) (Windsor), 51, 222, 300
'Lijsbeth van Rijn,' Rembrandt's sister (Stockholm) (Sir F. Cook, Richmond), 49
'Saskia van Uylenburch,' Rembrandt's wife; as Bellona, 65; Laughing, with hat (Dresden), 231; in profile (Cassel), 231
'Adriaen van Rijn,' Rembrandt's brother (St. Petersburg) (Stockholm), 49, 259; in a golden helmet (Berlin), 49

'Titus van Rijn,' Rembrandt's son (Lord Spencer) (Lord Crawford) (Wallace Collection) (Vienna) (Captain Holford), 87; (Amsterdam, van der Hoop), 88
'Hendrickje Stoffels,' Rembrandt's mistress; as Young Girl at window (Dulwich), 82, 280; At a Window (Berlin), 10, 86; in Salon Carré (Louvre), 23, 25, 86, 300, 318 f.; in White Wrapper (Mr. C. Morrison), 86, 300
'Geertgen Dircks,' nurse of Titus (St. Petersburg), 78
'Magdalena van Loo,' wife of Titus, as 'Young Girl leaning on a Sill' (?) (Stockholm), 88

(Other Portrait Studies)

'Student' (Brunswick), 208
'Rabbis,' 101, 258
Young Girl (Lanckoronski Collection, Vienna), 230
Aged Women (St. Petersburg, etc.), 259, 276 f.
'Student at the Window' (Ny Carlsberg, Copenhagen), 208
'Burgomaster' (National Gallery), 301
'Homer,' (The Hague), 305

SELF-PORTRAITS

Their challenge to us, 6; their likeness to Rembrandt, 207; their number, 48, 252
Full length (Dutuit Collection, Paris), 254
(The Hague), 52, 201 f., 254
(Amsterdam, Private Collection), 202
(Cassel), 202, 222
(Wallace Collection), 202, 254
(Pitti), 202
With Saskia on Knee (Dresden), 70 f., 162, 231, 263
With Saskia adorning Herself (Buckingham Palace), 254
With *Sturmhaube* (Cassel), 254
Leaning on Sill (National Gallery), 229, 253
As Standard-Bearer (Gustav de Rothschild), 254
As 'Polish Noble' (St. Petersburg), 254, 302
Painting from Hendrickje as Model (Glasgow), 85
(Buckingham Palace), 256
(Lady de Rothschild), 256, 257
(Cambridge), 257
(Earl of Ilchester), 255, 257, 301
(Vienna), half-length, 256
(Louvre), 256
(Lord Iveagh), 255
(National Gallery), 257
(Uffizi), 256
(Berlin, von Carstanjen), 257
(Vienna), 256
(Neeld Collection), 256

SINGLE PORTRAITS (*see* also PORTRAIT STUDIES)

Their character and place in his art, 204
'Coppenol' (St. Petersburg), 94, 169, 226; (Cassel), 169, 226
'Nicolaus Ruts' (Pierpont Morgan), 225 ff.
'Martin Looten' (Dorchester House), 227
'Saskia' (Cassel), 65, 99, 231, 263
'Saskia' (Dresden), 231
'Old Lady with a Ruff' (London), 51
Lady (Liechtenstein Collection), 231, 259
'Old Lady' (Edinburgh, Arthur Sanderson), 259
'Swalmius' (Antwerp), 260
'Lady with Fan' (Buckingham Palace); 'Man with Falcon' (Grosvenor House), 239, 259
'Andries de Graeff,' 101
'Elizabeth Bas' (Amsterdam), 260
'Sylvius, Jan' (posthumous) (Berlin, von Carstanjen), 260
'Nicolaes Berchem and Wife' (Grosvenor House), 260
'Bonus, Ephraim' (Six Collection), 170
'Jan Six' (Six Collection), 94, 104, 117, 207, 261, 300, 304, 319 ff.
'Bruyningh, Nicolaes' (Cassel), 104, 261, 300

PORTRAIT GROUPS

Their place in his art, 204
'Jan Pellicorne and Son'; 'Wife of Jan Pellicorne and Daughter' (Wallace Collection), 228
'Ship-Builder and Wife' (Buckingham Palace), 228

'Anslo' (Berlin), 36, 126, 219, 228, 260
Man and Wife, 101
'Jewish Bride' (Amsterdam, van der Hoop), 88, 94, 207, 263, 301, 314
'Family' (Brunswick), 94, 204, 263, 301, 305, 314 ff., 319

CORPORATION PIECES

Their number, 204
'Lesson on Anatomy' (The Hague), 63, 76, 99, 204, 234, 235 ff., 261, 300
'Sortie' or 'Night Watch' (Amsterdam), 76, 101, 103, 203, 204, 234, 235, 240 ff., 261, 268, 308, 324; Copy of by Lundens (National Gallery), 241 f.
'Deyman' Anatomy (Amsterdam), 95, 100, 103, 204
'Syndics' (Amsterdam), 96, 98, 103, 204, 261, 305, 323 ff.

RELIGIOUS COMPOSITIONS

'Repentant Judas,' 51, 222, 278
'Baptism of the Eunuch' (Oldenburg), 220
'St. Paul in Prison' (Stuttgart), 221
'Presentation in Temple' (Weber, Hamburg,) 222
'Samson and Delilah' (Royal Collection, Prussia), 49, 213, 222
'Christ at Emmaus' (Mad. André-Jacquemart, Paris), 216, 222, 286 f.
'Holy Family' (Munich), 212, 224, 280 f.
'St. Anastatius' (Stockholm), 223, 299
'Good Samaritan' (Wallace Collection), 157
'Simeon' or 'Presentation' (The Hague), 18, 49, 164, 210, 215, 224, 300, 302
'Philosophers' (Louvre), 223
'Incredulity of St. Thomas' (St. Petersburg), 213, 215, 286
'Entombment' (Dresden), 215
'Entombment' (Glasgow), 215, 218
'Christ before Pilate' (National Gallery), 157, 218, 232, 284
'Sacrifice of Isaac' (St. Petersburg), 136, 183, 212, 232, 298 f.
'Preaching of John the Baptist' (Berlin), 210, 215, 219, 232
'Passion' Series (Munich), 66, 89, 102, 157, 211, 214, 232, 283
'Taking Down from the Cross' (St. Petersburg), 102, 214, 283
'Susannah' (The Hague), 64, 146, 233
'Samson Threatening his Father-in-Law' (Berlin), 212
'Blinding of Samson' (Frankfort), 212, 213
'Angel leaving Tobit' (Louvre), 212
'Labourers in the Vineyard' (St. Petersburg), 211, 306 ff.
'Samson's Wedding Feast' (Dresden), 64
'Departure of Hagar' (Victoria and Albert Museum), 215
'Christ as Gardener' (Buckingham Palace), 137, 232, 248, 285
'Visitation' (Grosvenor House), 210, 215
'Holy Family' (Louvre), 233, 280 f.
'Manoah's Offering' (Dresden), 137, 212, 233
'David and Absalom' (St. Petersburg), 137
'Pietà' (National Gallery), 218
'Bathsheba' (Baron Steengracht, The Hague), 233
'Woman taken in Adultery' (National Gallery), 102, 131, 211
'Tobit and his Wife' (Berlin), 212
'Holy Family' (St. Petersburg), 82, 280
'Nativity' or 'Adoration of Shepherds' (Munich), 215, 232
'Nativity' (National Gallery), 136, 215
'Holy Family' (Cassel), 280 f.
'Susannah' (Berlin), 86, 233, 251
'Flight into Egypt' (Dublin), 18, 211, 251
'Good Samaritan' (Louvre), 88, 216, 263
'Christ at Emmaus' (Louvre), 128, 216, 263, 287 f.
'Christ at Emmaus' (Copenhagen), 216, 287
'Bathsheba,' Study for (Glasgow), 233
'Vision of Daniel' (Berlin), 136
'Tobit and his Wife' (Sir F. Cook, Richmond), 212
'Hannah and Samuel' (Bridgewater House), 58, 78, 112
'Christ and Mary Magdalen' (Brunswick), 128, 263, 285
'Unfaithful Servant' (Wallace Collection), 212

'Abraham with the Angels' (St. Petersburg), 212, 298
'Christ and Woman taken in Adultery' (Weber, Hamburg), 212
'Bathsheba' (Louvre), 86, 175, 233, 272, 310 f.
'Joseph before Potiphar' (St. Petersburg), 88, 104
'Joseph before Potiphar' (Berlin), 104
'Denial of Peter' (St. Petersburg), 95, 215
'Jacob Blessing the Children of Joseph' (Cassel), 95, 128, 212, 263, 301, 316 f.
'Adoration of Magi' (Buckingham Palace), 95, 104, 211
'Jacob Wrestling with the Angel' (Berlin), 212
'Moses Breaking the Tables' (Berlin), 212
'Circumcision' (Lord Spencer), 211
'Evangelist Matthew' (Louvre), 88
'David before Saul' (The Hague), 263
Religious Pictures of a Catholic type, 96
'Flagellation' or 'Scourging' (Darmstadt), 104, 263, 284
'Return of the Prodigal' (St. Petersburg), 34, 104, 128, 135, 163, 213, 263, 284, 290 ff., 301, 314

CLASSICAL, HISTORICAL, OR ALLEGORICAL COMPOSITIONS

Their Sources, 209
'Diana Bathing' (E. Warneck, Paris), 113, 138, 223
'Rape of Proserpina' (Berlin), 49, 211, 215, 248, 300
'Rape of Europa' (Princesse de Broglie), 18, 211, 248
'Diana and Callisto' (Anholt), 18, 139, 211
'Ganymede' (Dresden), 138, 173, 210
'Danaë' (St. Petersburg), 112, 175, 177, 234, 308 ff.
'Venus and Cupid' (Hendrickje and Cornelia) (Louvre), 86
'Eendract van 't land' (Rotterdam), 42, 219
'Philemon and Baucis,' 138, 211
'Claudius Civilis' (Stockholm), 96, 103, 305, 312 ff.

NUDE STUDIES

'Diana Bathing' (E. Warneck, Paris), 113, 138, 163, 223
'Danaë' (St. Petersburg), 112, 175, 177, 234, 308 ff.
'Bathsheba' (Rennes) (The Hague) (Glasgow), 233; (Louvre), 86, 175, 233, 272, 310 f.
'Susannah' (The Hague), 64, 146, 233; (Berlin), 86, 233, 251
Hendrickje Bathing (National Gallery), 86, 272

GENRE (*see* also PORTRAIT STUDIES)

In Rembrandt's art, 139, 207 f.
'Money Changer' (Berlin), 50, 208, 215, 221
Child Reading (St. Petersburg), 58
'Woman Weighing Gold' (Dresden), 208
Hendrickje Bathing (National Gallery), 86, 272

LANDSCAPE

Sources of their motives, 217: period of them, 247
'Czartoryski' Landscape (Cracow), 248
Stormy Scene (Brunswick), 217, 249, 303
Misty Landscape (Edinburgh), 249
Winter Landscape (Cassel), 251
Landscape with Ruin on the Hill (Cassel), 217, 250, 303
'Mill on Rampart' (Lord Lansdowne, Bowood), 47, 122, 217, 251 f., 262

ANIMALS

Not represented among paintings noticed in the text

STILL LIFE

'Dead Bittern' (Dresden), 218
Carcass of Ox (Louvre), 218

II. INDEX OF ETCHINGS ACCORDING TO THE NUMBERS OF BARTSCH

Bartsch's numbers, arranged in tens, are in brackets, followed by the numbers of the pages on which the respective etchings are referred to under Bartsch's enumeration

(7) 161, 191
(18) 161, 253 ; (19) 72
(20) (21) 161, 253 ; (22) 162, 168 ; (23) 161, 253 ; (28) 119, 174
(30) 190 ; (33) 134, 191 ; (35) 183 ; (36) 169 ; (37) 134, 177
(40) 177 ; (41) (42) 182 ; (44) 164, 249 ; (45) 183 ; (46) 182, 186; (47) 183 ; (49) 178
(50) 188, 192 ; (55) 183 ; (58) 281
(60) 183, 282 ; (61) 282 ; (63) (64) 183 ; (65) 282 ; (67) 181, 283 ; (69) 283
(71) 283 ; (72) 177 ; (73) 157, 283 ; (74) 153, 179, 283 ; (75) 183, 284; (76) 182, 184, 194, 284 ; (77) 157, 284 ; (78) 182, 184, 196, 284
(81) 157, 214 ; (83) 183, 184 ; (84) 177 ; (86) 182, 183, 184, 186 ; (87) 183 ; (88) 283 ; (89) 185, 286
(90) 157, 164 ; (98) 186, 191 ; (99) 177
(100) (101) (102) (103) 119 ; (104) 120, 135, 167 ; (107) 167
(112) 99 ; (114) (115) (116) 120
(121) 163 ; (124) 173 ; (126) 140, 173 ; (129) 173
(136) 173
(149) 191
(151) 121 ; (157) 174 ; (159) 173
(163) (164) (165) 162
(172) 162 ; (176) 163 ; (179) 162
(188–191) 185
(192) 85, 146, 175, 186 ; (193) 175 ; (197) 146 ; (198) 163, 175, 270 ; (199) 146, 175
(200) 146, 175 ; (201) 138, 163 ; (202) 146, 176 ; (203) 139, 176, 210 ; (204) 163 ; (205) 175 ; (206–256) 122 ; (206) 176 ; (208) 166, 191 ; (209) 124
(212) 165, 249
(222) 194 ; (225) (226) 166
(233) 165, 195 ; (234) 166
(261) 173 ; (263) 50 ; (264) 169
(270) 167 ; (271) 126, 169, 186 ; (272) 168, 169 ; (273) 106, 170 ; (274) 169 ; (275) 106, 168, 170 ; (276) 277) 169 ; (278) 142, 169 ; (279) 169
(280) 169 ; (282) 169 ; (283) 168, 169 ; (284) 169 ; (285) 127, 169
(310) 141, 173
(338) 159
(340) 163
(352) 159 ; (354) 159
(365) 163 ; (367) 163 ; (369) 73, 163
(370) 162

III. GENERAL INDEX

Accessories, in portraits, 171, 200; in Rembrandt's art, *see* 'Rembrandt'
Adriaen van Rijn, 47 f., 259; his wife, 259
Allegory, in literature and art in Rembrandt's time, 39 f.; in Rembrandt's art, *see* 'Rembrandt'
Amsterdam, in Rembrandt's day, 28 ff., 83, 96, 205; Rijks Museum at, 240; Town Hall (Palace) at, 100, 246, 312
Anslo, 36
Antwerp, in Rembrandt's day, 27
Aristotle, 294
Arminius, Arminianism, 35, 37

Back views, in Rembrandt's Figure Compositions, 78, 130
Baillie, Captain, 153
Baldinucci, 1, 35 f., 41, 69 f., 100, 186, 304
Bartsch; his *Catalogue*, 155 f.; on Rembrandt's Technique, 189, 190, 194, 196
Beggars, in Rembrandt's art, 26, 139 f., 162
Bellini, Giovanni, 17
Bible, The, importance of it in Holland in Rembrandt's day, 33; Rembrandt's knowledge and use of it, 34 f., 57 f.
Bijdragen, etc., of Utrecht, 59
Blake, William, 274
Blanc, Charles, 155 f., 159, 174, 183, 190, 196
Bol, Ferdinand, 67, 277
Bonus, Ephraim, 142, 170
Botticelli, 200
Bramer, Leonard, 19, 209
British Museum, Collection of Rembrandt's etchings in, 193
Brouwer, 69, 302
Bruyningh, Nicolaes, 104
Bueno, Ephraim, *see* 'Bonus'
Bürger (Thoré), 3, 93 f., 189, 323
Burlington Fine Arts Club, 19, 158, 189

Calvinism, in the Holland of Rembrandt's day, 34
Campagnola, 167
Carlyle, Thomas, 257
Carracci, The, 16, 69, 176
Castiglione, Raphael's Portrait of, 161
Christ, in Rembrandt's art, 34, 130, 140, 179, 181, 184, 185, 279 ff.
Cocq, Frans Banning, 241 f., 268
Commission, Dutch State, for Protection of Ancient Monuments, 44
Constable, John, 20
Coppenol, Lieven van, 169
Cornelia (child of Rembrandt and Hendrickje), 85, 86, 107 f.
Corot, 8, 23.
Corporation Pieces, in Holland in Rembrandt's day, 32 f., 66, 202
Correggio, 17, 139, 176, 215, 230, 272
Craeyers, Louis, 92 ff.

Dante, 292, 311
Dealers in works of art, in Rembrandt's day, 32, 102
Delft, Hospital at, 236
Dickens, Charles, 276
Dijk, Antonis van, *see* 'Vandyke'; Jan van, 246
Dircks, Geertgen, *see* 'Geertgen'
Domenichino, 280
Dou, Gerard, 63, 219, 307

Drawings by Rembrandt; their number, 1, 113 f.; their chronology, 119; their authenticity, 119; their relation to the rest of his work, 110 ff., 126 ff.; fertility of his imagination in, 128 ff.; their materials, 115 ff.; their technical qualities, 113 ff., 128, 145; reproductions of, 114; from Indian miniatures, 125; memoranda by Rembrandt on the back of, 67
Dürer, Albrecht, 6, 8, 33, 86, 128, 147, 149, 270, 274
Dutch, The, in Rembrandt's day; the people, 30 f.; their language and literature, 37 ff.

'Effect,' in painting, 25
Elsheimer, Adam, 15 ff., 111, 208, 209, 210, 251, 286
England, supposed sojourn of Rembrandt in, 95 f.
Engraving, processes of 147 ff.
Etchings by Rembrandt; their number, 1, 155 f., 164; range of his work in, 111, 186; their arrangement, 157 f.; their chronology, 51, 157 f., 159 ff.; their 'states,' 66, 93, 95, 106, 152 f., 167 f., 175; their prices, 66, 105 f., 169, 195; reproductions of, 155
Coppers on which they were executed, 105, 154. The etching point, 150; its use by Rembrandt, 159, 166, 174, 187, 190, 191 f., 195 f. The drypoint, 149 f.; its use by Rembrandt, 167, 174, 186 f., 191, 193 f.: its 'burr,' 149 f.; use of the 'burr' by Rembrandt, 187, 194, 197. The burin or graver, 148 f.; its use by Rembrandt, 187 f., 196. Sulphur, flour of, used on plates, 189, 193. Paper for printing etchings, 189. Printing, art in, 151; Rembrandt's methods of, 188, 193
Etty, William, 266
Eyck, van, 8, 201

Félibien, 1, 304
Fielding, 275
Flanders, in Rembrandt's day, 27 f.
Flemish language, 37 f.
Flemish painting, 14, 17, 200, 295, 302
Flinck, Govert, 67, 99, 123, 277
Florentine painting, its character, 14, 200
Francen, Abraham, 32, 104, 105
Frederick Henry, Prince, Stadhouder, 66, 89, 102
Fromentin, Eugène, 3, 189, 216, 288 f., 295, 318 f.

Gainsborough, 295, 296
Geertgen Dircks, 77 ff.
Geest, Wybrand de, 103
Genre painting, 208; in the Italian Schools, 14; by Rembrandt, 139, 207 f.
Ghirlandajo, 200, 257
Giorgione, 210
Giotto, 274
Gold Ornaments, on Rembrandt's sitters, 201
Gomarus, 37
Grisailles, 157, 210, 218 f.
Guide to Rembrandt Exhibition, British Museum, 175, 188
'Gysis, Georg,' by Holbein, 171

Haarings, the, 103, 172
Haarlem, Town Hall at, 202, 220
Haden, Sir Seymour, 157, 167, 189
Hals, Frans, 7, 22, 24, 111, 202, 204, 205, 228, 231, 237, 274, 302, 304, 321
Harmen van Rijn, 45 ff.
Hats, how worn in Rembrandt's day, 205
Helmholtz, 21
Helst, van der, 7, 204, 245
Hendrickje Stoffels, 10, 77, 81 ff., 96 ff., 106 f., 142, 146, 310, 318
Hertsbeek, van, 90 ff.
Hogarth, 112, 160, 275, 280
Holbein, 33, 128, 171, 201, 205, 274, 315
Holland, in Rembrandt's day, 28 ff., 57, 83, 85
Holy Family, in Rembrandt's art, 208, 224, 279 f.
Hooch, de, 307
Hoogstraten, 240, 245, 308
Houbraken, 1, 67, 81, 82, 100, 198, 204, 315
Hull, Rembrandt at (?), 95
Huygens, Constantin, 59 f., 66, 89, 160, 277 f.

Identification of Rembrandt's models, 10, 48
Impressionism, 20 ff.
Indian miniatures, 125
Intimité, in Northern art, 15

Isabel de Bourbon, portraits of, 206
Israel, Manasseh ben, 36, 169
Italian painting, its character, 13, 25, 128

Jews, at Amsterdam, 36, 140; in Rembrandt's art, 36, 140
Joint work of Rembrandt and pupils, 67, 157
Jonghe, Clement de, 106

Keihl, Bernard, 69
Keyser, de, 225
Kolloff, 2
Koninck, de, 165

Lairesse, 1
Landscape; Flemish, 14, 17; Venetian, 14; Rembrandt's, *see* 'Rembrandt'
Last Supper, The, in Rembrandt's art, 131 f.
Lastman, Pieter, 18, 19, 54, 59, 220
Leyden; in Rembrandt's day, 28, 43 ff., 140; sources of its wealth, 36; its University (Academy), 37, 39, 55; beggars in, 140
Leyden, Lucas van, *see* 'Lucas'
Lievens, Jan, 277; Huygens on, 60
Lighting, Schemes of, Rembrandt's, 213 f., 267
Lijsbeth van Rijn, 48 f., 225
Likeness in portraiture, 48, 205 f.
Lionardo da Vinci, 181, 231, 308, 317, 318
Lippmann, F., 114, and chapter vi *passim*; 159, 166, 185, 266
Louis XIV, classicism of his régime, 41
Lucas van Leyden, 69, 70, 161
Ludick, Lodowijk van, 103
Lutma, Jan, 172

Madonna di San Sisto, 210
Maes, Nicholaes, 277
Magdalena van Loo, 107 f.
Mander, Karel van, 57, 209
Mantegna, 69
Matthew Arnold, 264
Mennonites, sect of the, 35 f.
Metsu, Gabriel, 139
Mezzotint, 148, 153, 186, 188, 197
Michelangelo, 69, 257, 269, 274
Middleton, C. H., 156 f.
Miereveld, Michael van, 59, 225, 236
Mill, 'Rembrandt's,' 46 f.
Millais, Sir John, 266, 274, 320
Millet, J. F., 162, 274
Milton, his relation to Vondel, 39
Models, Rembrandt's, identification of, 10, 48
Modern painting, its character, 20, 293
'Money-changer,' as 'genre' subject, 208
Montague, his *Delights of Holland*, 43
Monochromes, *see* 'Grisailles'

'Naturalists,' the Italian, 15
Neeltjen van Rijn, 45 f., 51 f.
Netherlands, Catholic, Rembrandt in (?), 96
Northern painting, its character, 15, 20

Oil painting, technique of, 14; Rembrandt's use of, *see* 'Paintings by Rembrandt'
Orlers, 39, 43, 53 f.
Ornia, Gerbrand, 90, 99, 103
Oud Holland, quoted or referred to, 9, 55, 59, 63, 66, 78, 80, 81, 83, 85, 90, 91, 93, 95, 99, 107, 207
Overbury, Sir Thomas, quoted, 30 f., 85
Ovid, translation of, 57, 209

Painting; Flemish, 14, 17, 200, 295, 302; Florentine, 14, 200; Italian, 13, 25, 128; Modern, 20, 293; Northern, 15, 20. *See* also 'Genre'
Paintings by Rembrandt; their number, 1, 200; in his inventory in bankruptcy, 93; unidentified, 101, 102; their state of preservation, 296; impressionism in, 20 ff., 213, 263, 272, 285, 319; progressive simplification in, 252, 262, 284, 291. Colouring in, 223, 238, 299 ff.; Lighting, effects of in, 25, 213 ff., 238, 240, 267; finish in, 315, 319; Carnations, (flesh painting) 12, 224, 226, 229, 238, 272, 300, 309. Technique (handling), 115 f., 189 ff., 269, 295 ff.; use of palette knife, 305, of the brush handle, 269. *See* also 'Rembrandt'
'Pandora' (Six's Book of Drawings), 99
Paudiss, Christophel, 230
Pictures by Rembrandt, *see* 'Paintings'
Pictures, religious, in the northern schools, 16 ff., 33, 208

Pigments, Rembrandt's use of, 296 ff.
Piles, de, 1, 2, 129, 207, 267, 304
Plato, 294
'Plein Air' school, 16
Poelenburg, 209
Portraits, different styles of treating, 170
Portraiture in Holland in Rembrandt's day, 32 f.
Properties, artistic, used by Rembrandt, 48, 50, 69 f., 93 f., 201
Pupils of Rembrandt, 1, 63, 67, 69, 166, 176
Pynas, 19

Raeburn, Sir Henry, 205
Raphael, 5, 6, 69, 136, 161, 209
Ravesteyn, Jan van, 225
Reformation, the, its influence on art, 33 f.
Rembrandt; His Life; materials for it, 1 f., 9; birth and early years, 58 ff.; family, 45 ff., 52; abodes, 63, 67 f., 85, 91, 95, 225; betrothal and marriage, 65, second marriage (?), evidence for, 84; earnings, 66 f., 89, 97 f., 101 f., 203; collections, 57, 93 f.; pupils, 67, 157; irregularity of life, 9, 77 f.; secret of his failure, 77; relations with friends, 98 f.; financial troubles, 88 ff.; inventory of his goods, 17, 68, 91 f., 126; supposed sojourn in England, 95 f.; death, 108; grave, 108; epitaph, 109; repute in his own day, 219

His Personality and Habits; physiognomy and build, 52; Huygens's account of him, 60 ff.; simplicity in manner of living, 82; stay-at-home habits, 83; independence, 41; behaviour at auctions, 69, 89; vein of coarseness, 12, 100, 274, 275; early aging, 255 f.; failure of eyesight (?), 105

His Intellectual and Religious Side; Rembrandt as thinker, 11, 274 ff.; his education, 53 ff.; his letters, 56; signature, 56; collection of books, 57, 126; love of the Bible, 35, 57, 278 ff.; Protestantism in his art, 34, 182, 290; a Mennonite, 35

His Artistic Genius, 6, 11; relation of his art to his life, 5 f., 252 ff.

His work as an artist; its extent, 1, 200; progressive simplification in, 167, 252, 262, 284, 291; feeling in it for beauty, 12, 144 f., 274; for character, 209, 275; for likeness, 48, 168, 205 f.; for landscape, 122 f., 165, 167, 216 f., 247 ff.; for still life and accessories, 173, 200 f., 218, 221, 262, 280, 307; for the nude, 143 f., 209 f., 223, 238 f., 270 ff.

His originality, 61, 200; his subjectivity, 206, 326; his painstaking spirit, 62, 221 f.; his use of allegory, 42

His self-portraits, 160, 222, 252 ff., 267

His poses, 227 f., 260; his success with old people, 204; his treatment of hands, 145, 204, 229, 298; of hair, 298

His conventions, 12, 288; his restlessness, 266 f., 269; his amateurishness, 265 ff.; his tendency to the theatrical, 164, 213, 222, 245, 283, 286; his fancy for military dress, 253 f., 257

See also
Drawings by Rembrandt
Etchings by Rembrandt
Paintings by Rembrandt

Repoussoirs, in Rembrandt's compositions, 130, 225, 313
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 205, 227, 240, 266, 274, 296
Romney, George, 274
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 274
Rovinski, Dmitri, 155, 172, 189
Rubens, 6, 42, 69, 119, 206, 283, 302, 303, 310, 326; his influence on Rembrandt, 42, 120, 213, 259
Rumbartus van Rijn, 140, 142

Sandrart, 1, 17, 56, 70, 82, 98, 100, 204
Saskia van Uylenburgh, 64, 66, 72 f., 85, 101, 141, 163, 206; in Rembrandt's art, 49 f., 52, 64, 70, 72, 162, 163, 206, 309
Scheltema, 3, 66, 68, 73, 78, 83, 90
Seghers, Hercules, 19, 69, 217
Shakespeare, Rembrandt compared to, 12, 264, 276
Silver point, drawings in, 64
Six, Jan, 40, 90, 99, 103, 104, 117, 170, 304, 319 f.
Snyders, Frans, 120
Spinosa, Baruch, 36
Steen, Jan, 139
Stoffels, Hendrickje, *see* 'Hendrickje'

Suythoff, 107
Swanenburgh, Jacob van, 19, 54, 58, 219
Sylvius, Jan, 64, 260

TACITUS, 313
Teniers, 303
Tennyson, Lord, 257
Titia van Rijn, 107 f.
Titian, 5, 6, 69, 167, 304, 318
Titus van Rijn, 9, 72, 77, 83, 87 ff., 97 ff., 106 f., 141, 143 f., 207
Tobit, story of, 16; in Rembrandt's art, 183, 208, 211 f., 278 f.
Tulp, Nicolaes, 99, 236 f.; Margaretha (Six's wife), 99
Turner, J. M. W., 6, 8, 56, 116, 153, 248, 249, 250, 251, 266, 297

Urkunden über Rembrandt, 9; quoted and referred to, *passim*
Uylenburch; Hendrick van, 63, 74; Hiskia van, 74; Rombertus van, 64; Saskia van, *see* 'SASKIA'

VANDYKE, 69, 160, 205, 206. 231, 259
Velasquez, 5, 8, 22, 24, 105, 111, 162, 171, 176, 205 f., 227, 266, 272, 295, 296, 322, 326 f.
Velde, van de, Esaias, 19; Jan, 19
Vertue, his *Diaries*, 95
Venetians, the, 272, 295, 326 f.
Vision, theories of, 21
Vliet, van, 221
Vosmaer, 3, 44, 47, 58, 120, 158, 171, 191

WESTPHALIA, Peace of, Rembrandt's design for celebration of, 42, 219
Whistler, James, 272, 274
Willems, Rebecca, 108
Witsen, Cornelis, 90 f.

YORK, Rembrandt at (?), 95

ZOLA, Émile, 275

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